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QUITE ALONE.

BOOK THE SECOND: WOMANHOOD.

CHAPTER XXXVII. ON THE RIVER-BANK.

HE who writes these lines was, many years since, dining in a cheap restaurant in the Palais Royal. He liked to dine in state; but, being poor, was forced to put up with the second-floor splendour of the great Palace of Gormandising. The glass is as glittering, and the gilding as gaudy in the attic as in the basement of this place, only, there is a diminution of price correspondent to the ascent you make, and, by an odd paradox, you lose caste as you mount. What matters it? If that which they call a poulet à la Marengo on the first floor be, as they assert, a nasty mess hashed up from the scourgings and leavings of better cook-shops, and the poulet downstairs be a triumph of the art in which Carême and Ude excelled, it must come to the same thing in the long run. Abate a little for the difference in flavour—and what is flavour? Is there anything nastier than an olive, or caviar, or the trail of a woodcock, at first tasting? You will find both dishes equally rich in colour, multifarious in ingredients, rich and sloppy. And both will make you equally bilious the next morning.

He of whom I write, then, being pinched in purse, dined, not at Véfour's below, but at the humbler Richard's above. He had some youth and health remaining, then. He could look upon the wine when it was red, or even when it was the lividest ordinaire ever manufactured, without dreading its after effects. He paid his forty sous; had his three courses; fed, and was content.

Now here was a thing which struck him between his third service and his dessert, on the instant occasion consisting of a pear—a pear so swollen, supine and sleepy, that, being a Radical young man at that period, he likened it to an Elder Brother of the Trinity House. The thing struck him thus. Richard's is *very* brave indeed, in looking-glasses. There are mirrors on every side of you. Though ever so solitary at a table, you need never, if reflexion can help it, be alone. You have the company of yourself. Eyes right and eyes left, and then turn volte-face: so you are quadrupled. You become

twins twice over: quins, if I may coin such a word.

The person discoursed of, however, was satisfied with using the knife, fork, and plate before him as a plane of perspective, and looked straight before him without changing his base. In front of him was a very large looking-glass in a very gay gold frame. Naturally, in this he saw himself. Naturally, also, he saw reflected in the looking-glass which was at the other end of the dining-hall, another self of his, taken dorsally. And, in equal obedience to the immutable laws of nature, the starting-points of reflexion and refraction being once established, there stretched before him an interminable vista of mirrors that were before and mirrors that were behind, of front selves and back selves, of table-knives, forks, and chandeliers over and over again, to infinity. So, lately, standing upon a high tower upon a rock, looking upon the Falls of Niagara, did this same person ask, unthinkingly, and like a fool as he was, of the negro who was his guide, whether the rush of waters were always in that wise: whereon the black man answered him, not according to his folly, but in simple wisdom: "I 'speak, mas'r, it's gwine on so for ebber and ebber." For ever and ever. The solemn words brought the scene of the looking-glass back to his mind. They too went on for ever and ever. Although the vanishing lines of the perspective diminished at last to a pin's point, and their continuity was undiscernible to the keenest gaze, there must have stretched on, more and more microscopically delineated, myriads upon myriads more looking-glasses, tables, knives, forks, and diners. The old schoolmen used to hold disputations on the numbers of legions of angels that could dance on the point of a needle. The thesis is not so absurd as it seems. Give us but a lens of sufficient magnifying power, and we might discover how upon some spicula of matter ten thousand times finer than a "Coventry hundred," not thousands, but millions of God's creatures, having heads, and lungs, and ducts, and bowels, and lives, do dance.

The looking-glasses, then, went on for ever and ever. There could not be an end to them, for they had two ends. There could not be a beginning, for there were two beginnings, or rather the beginning was the end, and the end was the beginning, for the foremost mirror did no more and no less in glancing back its fellow

than did the hindermost one. It was the old old story of the serpent with its tail in its mouth.

And while he who had paid forty sous for his dinner was gazing on this, and musing upon it, the deft waiter approached him from behind with the sleepy pear. He saw him in the glass. He was a very white-faced waiter, and his grin was ghastly. Late hours, much gas, and the steam of many dinners, had made him hopelessly pallid. Never too much flesh had he, I wot, and that which he had originally possessed had wasted away beneath the influence of the gas-burners and the stew-pans, so that he looked now, merely as though a wan leathery integument had been drawn for decency's sake over his skull. With his closely-cropped cranium, whiskerless jaws, gleaming teeth, sunken eyes, hollow cheeks, white cravat, with his monstrous bow, and ever present smirk, he was uncommonly like a genteel death's head. Something like a shudder came over the guest as he looked upon this fetch of Mortality, smirking in the midst of the vast image of Eternity streaming away from him. As there were more mirrors, so were there more Death's-head waiters; and they encompassed him on every side, and went on for ever and ever. Oh! mortal man, for ever and ever.

That Life should be so dovetailed into Death, faster and firmer than the cunningest joiner, with his glue and his mortice, ever dreamt of, is but natural, is but the way of the world, is but decreed beyond our comprehension and our conception. Better, perhaps, to take them as they come, and wait for the end in humble hope, than to continue peering into the looking-glasses till we go mad.

Much the more so, as the yellow forehead of the King of Terrors is often wreathed with flowers, as the worm that never dies has the prettiest painted skin imaginable, as Death is but the reverse side of an arras all woven in gay designs representing the innocent pastimes of Arcadia, and the lives of gods and goddesses. What did Mr. Wordsworth's simple child, down Rydal Mount way, know of death? The churchyard was her playground. Those who slept beneath were not dead, but her brothers and sisters, and they were seven. Death, after all, is of the chameleon kind. Scan him very narrowly and he changes hue. Get over the embarrassment of a first acquaintance, and he turns out to be somebody else. He is no longer Death, but Life Eternal.

Now, there was a certain little maiden who had lived all her life on the very brink of the grave; who had been cradled, as it were, in a coffin, and swaddled in cereclothes, and whose playthings were, after a manner, skulls and cross-bones, a mattock and a spade. Of course I am speaking metaphorically. The certain little maiden, pretty little Mademoiselle Amanda, had no bodily acquaintance with the ugly things I mention. Yet she knew all about them, heard them talked about every hour in the day, lived over them and bore their icy neighbour-

hood with great philosophy. Why should she trouble her innocent young head about such horrors? She had been for long years accustomed to them; besides, they were her good papa's business, not hers. She was very fond of her good papa. She was very fond of everybody. She was but seventeen years of age; and at that period of life I have known youngsters who were fond of spiders and monkeys, and the ugliest of dogs, and the crossdest of cats.

Mademoiselle Amanda lived in the left wing of the Edifice, which was but one story high. The Edifice was called (I am afraid) The Morgue. Her good papa had his office in the opposite wing, and there he kept his huge vellum-bound and brass-clamped registers, which were quite as bulky, and well-nigh as numerous, as the books of a London banking-house. Papa was a public functionary. He held a responsible post in the service of the good city of Paris, and lodging, fire, and candles were allowed him gratis. Amanda's sitting and bed room were just over the large room on the ground floor, occupied by the lodgers in the Edifice. The lodgers never disturbed her, although they came in at all hours, some of them very unseasonable. They were the quietest lodgers in the world. They seldom stopped more than two or three days, and, strange to say, they paid nothing for their bed, or their board—if that could properly be called board which was in reality stone. Amanda's parlour was quite a grove of singing-birds. She had two canaries, she had a thrush, she had a linnet. She had a blackbird who sang the "Marseillaise" and the "Parisienne"—airs not then entirely prohibited in France—but who discreetly avoided the imputation of being an out and out Republican of the red kind by now and then tuning up "La Belle Gabrielle" and "Vive Henri Quatre," but who was not, by any means, a Bonapartist bird, seeing that he could never be persuaded to give so much as a bar of "Partant pour la Syrie."

Amanda's walls were hung with pretty lithographs and water-colour drawings. On her balcony, overlooking the old houses on the quays, with their high roofs and blinking little windows, with the narrow bright blue Seine shining between, and the towers of Notre-Dame overlooking all, she had a miniature conservatory. Yes, she had roses and geraniums and forget-me-nots, and the modest sweet-smelling mignonnette. She adored flowers: so seemingly did Blaise, her cat, though oftentimes chastised for lying perdu among the foliage, whence at his ease he could blink with covetous eyes upon the birds in their cages. She was fond of music too, this accomplished little Amanda, and had not only a pretty cottage piano made by Pleyel, but absolutely a harp—a harp from the great Erard's factory. Her good papa denied her nothing. Sheets of music lay about—dulcet little barcaroles, and romances, and chansonnettes, the which she warbled, accompanying herself meanwhile with such sweetness and such grace, as frequently to elicit from her guests twitters of approving criticism. Then

she drew—drew very prettily, too. Big classical heads with round chins, vacant eyes, broad foreheads, and tresses like coils of rope. These she finished in Italian chalk on tinted paper, to the delight of her professor, who was a mighty man from the *Ecole des Beaux Arts*. Did she paint? Yes, flowers, and a little landscape. Anything else? Well, she embroidered charmingly; was not too fond of novel reading for a girl of her age, choosing even then the demurest of fictions, and utterly eschewing the fascinating but perilous *MM. Dumas* and *Paul de Kock*. She was very good and pious. She went regularly to mass, and had *ses pauvres*—her poor, whom she tended and succoured quite as though she had been a staid middle-aged person. As yet, her heart had said nothing to her. She had been to a ball but thrice in her life. Men, with the exception of *Monsieur Philibert*, she regarded as sweet and noble creatures, but still as devouring monsters to be feared and fled from. *Ces terribles Messieurs*, she called them. *Monsieur Philibert* she did not fear. He was old and fat, and she had known him long, and he was papa's good friend.

Little Amanda's mamma was dead. Nobody but herself, her father, and a *bonne*, lived on the first (and consequently top) floor of the Edifice. Down stairs there were people who took care of the lodgers, but she never saw them. There was a side-door for her to go out at, and once a week or so, when business was slack—for the lodgers were very capricious as to the time of their coming, though exceedingly regular as to that of their going—Amanda's papa would take her to dine *en ville*, and then to some little boulevard theatre, whence she would come back skipping and clapping her hands, and humming over the airs of the *vaudeville* couplets she had heard. The little girl was as good as gold, and as happy as the day was long.

On the very same morning that *Jean Baptiste Constant* was entertaining his friends at the *Café Restaurant Chesterfield*, Amanda, too, had company in the first floor of the Edifice. Lily was there. Now, I am afraid that *Madame de Kergolay* would have been very angry indeed had she known that her protégée was paying such a visit, or was in such a place. It was, perhaps, the queerest place in the world for a young lady who was being educated in genteel notions to find herself in. But it was all *Madame Thomas's* fault. That good woman could see that Lily was unhappy, that she was mourning in secret. She half-divined the cause of her sorrow. She strove to assuage it by every means in her power, to divert the young girl's mind, and to lead her to more cheerful thoughts. "*Ces jeunessees*—these young ones are always the same. They get an idea into their heads, and it takes a hydraulic machine to get it out again. Let us try to amuse her. Let us strive to make her gay. She must be dull sometimes in that old place of ours. Yes, she must be in love. Malediction upon love, and yet one can hardly help blessing it at the same

time. What an old fool I am! If *Ma'amsele Lily* is in love, I cannot expect her to make a confidante of an old, worn-out, battered thing like me. Let us place her in contact with something young, and fresh, and innocent, to whom she can tell half her secret, and who will guess the rest. Did I say young, and fresh, and innocent? Ah, *ma foi*, they are all ready to guess *ce calembourg-là*. They can all find out what love is. Allons, I will take her to see Amanda. There can be no harm in that."

Amanda was one of *Madame Thomas's* great cronies. She had known and loved her, ever since she was a little child. She had an awful reverence for Amanda's papa, whom she called *Monsieur le Gardien*; she had known his wife, that amiable blonde woman, with a perpetual cold in her head, which had ultimately got into her stomach, and so, reaching her feet, killed her. She entertained the profoundest respect for *Monsieur Philibert*, who, whenever he met her, rarely failed to regale her with the latest on dits and the choicest snuff. The first floor over the Edifice was, indeed, *Madame Thomas's* great gossiping shop. Whenever she had half an hour to spare, she would slip away and revel in chat. Nor did her patronage of the Edifice stop there. *Madame Thomas* wasn't exactly a ghoul. She wasn't a vampire. She had no cruelty in her composition. She was a very kind-hearted old woman, well enough disposed to be jovial on occasion; but she had, in common with a great number of other old women, a secret and irresistible penchant for that which some persons are accustomed to call the horrible. She couldn't help it. About people's tastes it is useless to dispute. Everybody has his taste, his whim, his fancy, his hobby. *Madame Thomas* had hers. She did not carry it to excess, but she was forced to gratify it sometimes. She liked to trot down stairs, at the termination of her gossip on the first floor of the Edifice, and see how the lodgers were getting on. It did her good. She liked it, although she was not very far removed from that period of life when she might reasonably expect to become a lodger herself, a permanent one, although not in *that* edifice. Sometimes the lodgers were green, and *Madame Thomas* would take a great deal of snuff; sometimes they were blue, at which she would take more, and cry "*Pouah!*" And not unfrequently they would be both green and blue.

Amanda did her best to entertain her guests. She bustled about, putting her birds through the most winning of their ways, and by clever tapping at the bars of their cages, and tempting them with bits of sugar between her pretty lips, eliciting from them the sweetest of their carols. Of her flowers, too, she made great show, blowing aside their petals, and turning up their delicate leaves to show her visitors. Then she sat down to the piano, and played some of her liveliest pieces; and then—no severer critics being near than a young girl as innocent as herself, and an old woman who knew no more of music than she did of Greek—

she sang some arch little French songs—songs that had refrains like the fluttering of birds' wings, or the pattering of mice into their holes—songs which didn't mean much, and were mainly, if you please, nonsense; but which, at least, didn't mean mischief—at once a rarity and an advantage, I apprehend, in the vocal music of France the Fair.

By this it was breakfast-time. The *bonne* set the table, and laid out the simple summer cates on which the girl usually breakfasted—eggs on the plate, cream cheese, fruit, plenty of bread-and-butter, coffee, and a little thin red wine. "If good papa and Monsieur Philibert should come in," quoth Amandine, "their beefsteak and their omelette will be ready for them in five minutes." There was a stronger wine, too, for the use of good papa and his friends. Strange to say, the wine was always kept in a cupboard on a level with the dwelling-rooms of the Edifice. They had a cellar down stairs: why didn't they store their Bordeaux and their cognac there? Well, Amanda didn't like the notion. Perhaps she thought the cellar, so near the Seine, was damp; perhaps she feared that those lodgers, usually so well behaved, might get up some night and inebriate themselves on her papa's potables. And the bare notion of one of those lodgers roaming about the cellar! Ugh!

By-and-by arrived good papa, and with him his ancient and constant friend, Monsieur Philibert. This last was the plumpest, rosiest, brightest-eyed, whitest-toothed, most contented-looking man you could wish to see on a summer's day, or out of the ranks of the twenty-seventh battalion of the Legion of the Seine, or out of the members of his own peculiar profession, which is saying a good deal. Philibert was a National Guardsman, and, as such, naturally wore spectacles, and was slightly inclined to corpulence. He was not quite a carpet warrior, however. That big bearskin, those epaulettes of scarlet worsted, those snowy cross-belts, had shone with distinction at several barricades, and had loomed large in the forefront of the battle, when the Boulevard du Temple, after Fieschi's horrid attempt on the king's life, was swept by troops. Philibert was not quite so angry with the half-crazy regicide as it would perhaps have beseemed a loyal man, bourgeois de Paris, and strong adherent of the order of things and the dynasty of July, to have shown himself. He spoke of the murderous Italian, pending his trial and condemnation, as "le Monsieur." Once he was heard to allude to him as "le pauvre diable." You see that Fieschi, with his infernal machine, although he missed the principal object of his hatred, and blew off, instead, his own fingers, and ultimately his own head, yet managed to kill Marshal Mortier, who, in full uniform, was riding by the side of Louis Philippe. And did not the murdered marshal have one of the grandest of funerals ever seen in Paris—triumphal car, winged Victories, gilt wreaths, pall of silver tissue, whole Birnam woods of ostrich plumes, horses draped in black velvet—every

luxury, in fine? And was not Philibert there? Not Philibert in the bearskin and red epaulettes of the civic soldier, but Philibert in full new glossy black, in plaited and ruffled linen, in shorts and silk stockings—Philibert with the cocked-hat known as *chapeau bras* beneath his left arm, and a shining ebony truncheon tipped with silver in his right hand—Philibert with a dress-sword by his side, a silver chain round his neck, and silver buckles in his shoes? For he also was a marshal of France, after a fashion, and had a right to bear a bâton.

He was, indeed, a master of the ceremonies attached to the Corporation of Undertakers—to the *Pompes Funèbres*—and in that capacity had conducted some of the most splendid funeral processions of modern times. The unthinking and the malicious called him a *croque-mort*, a vampire, a ghoul, but Philibert smiled philosophically at their sneers. The plump and rosy man was not only contented, but proud of his profession. "I shall yet live," he would say, "to conduct the imposing ceremonies incidental to the interment of the great Napoleon, whose sacred remains are still detained by his barbarous and perfidious enemies on the Atlantic rock, where they slew him. What a funeral that will be! With the aid of the military force, the paraphernalia of the *garde-meuble*, and the choristers of the Opera, the *Pompes Funèbres* shall, please Heaven, far surpass all they have hitherto done. Funerals of Foy, Manuel, Louis the Eighteenth, S. A. R. the Duke of Berry—bah! those little parades of the Theatre shall all be thrown into the shade. When we file down the Champs Elysées on our way to the Invalids, something shall be seen." Monsieur Philibert was an artist. Thus, though he half forgave Fieschi for shooting a marshal of France who could be sumptuously interred, he professed the utmost horror and indignation at the fate of the humble workmen and workwomen, victims to the indiscriminate massacre caused by the infernal machine. "Is not the *fosse commune*—the common ditch at Montmartre—gorged enough," he would say, "but that we must strive to choke it still more with *misérables*, confined in white deal with tin-tacks, and shovelled into the earth at an expense to the good city of Paris of eight livres seven sols? And these *émeutes*, these riots, which, in my capacity as a member of the civic guard, I have the honour to assist in quelling. Dites-moi donc un peu, of what good is it shooting and bayoneting all these deluded artisans and half-starved *va nu-pieds*? It is nobody's business to bury them decently, and after cumbering your register for a time, good papa, what is there for them but a pit filled with quick lime. It is inconceivable. Poor people ought not to die. They should go away somehow, or, at least, they should save the administration the trouble of burying them at a tariff which I have no hesitation in affirming to be indecently and absurdly low. Why is there not a Ganges into which the corpses of *ces hommes de rien du tout* could be thrown, or a funeral pyre whereon their bodies could be incinerated? For

such a ceremony, performed en masse, the *Pompes Funèbres* could, perhaps, display a taste and a luxury from the use of which, in individual cases, it is debarred." This was Monsieur Philibert's grand manner. There was no harm in him, however. He was one of the mildest and most placable of men. He was a widower, and his wife had once kept a baby-linen warehouse: what time, ere he himself had gone into the undertaking business, Philibert had not disdained to hold a senior clerkship in a *Bureau de Nourrices*: an agency office for wet-nurses.

SILK-SPINNING SPIDERS.

THE arachnida are not all spiders, or spinners, and are not, indeed, the only or the principal producers of silk. There are spiders, or arachnida, which cannot spin a thread, and there are shell-fish, or mollusca, which spin cables. When, after much reading, the simple-minded reader gets into the meaning of the authors of systems and classifications, he finds that they often do not mean what they say; for by spiders they do not mean all animals which spin, and by arachnida they really intend nothing more definite than the six-footed and the eight-footed groups of animals.

Silk is formed of fibrine, the substance of the fibres, with a coating of albumen, a layer of gelatine, and some fat and colouring matter. The chief spiders of silk are caterpillars. Maggots, or larvae, are the spinners which clothe the fair sex of the hominal species in silken attire. The attempts to make something useful of the silk of the animals more especially called spiders, have all ended hitherto in nothing better than the production of curiosities. Gloves and purses made of spider silk may sometimes be seen in museums. But gloves and purses are sold and bought in the cities of the Mediterranean, which have been woven of the silk spun by shell-fish of the pinna kind. For that matter, I have seen a purse which was knitted of the fibres of the mineral called asbestos. The newspapers of Vienna, some years back, mentioned that several pairs of excellent silk stockings had been knitted of spider silk; but the news, as the French say, awaits confirmation. Spider silk has, however, it appears to be established by sufficient testimony, been successfully used as thread. A spider is found on the island of St. Helena which is handsomely marked, banded, and coloured, the fibres of the egg-bag of which might be used as silk; and the ladies of the Bermudas actually use the silk of spiders for sewing purposes. The silk of a spider common in the Bermudas, *Epeira clavipes*, is so strong that it can be wound from the insect itself like cotton from a reel. The webs of this spider stretch ten feet across between the cedar-trees, catching large insects and small birds: a certain proof that their threads rival cotton threads in strength. In reference to the practical, industrial, and commercial question of

the utility of spider silk, it is an important fact that their webs are strong enough to hold small birds. When Madame Merian first published this fact, it was stoutly denied by the stay-at-home naturalists, the regular critics of travellers' tales. Here is a specimen of the sort of experiment upon the results of which the testimony of observers is often gainsayed, and even their veracity and good faith called in question. Madame Merian having said there were spiders which snared and devoured birds, a naturalist wounded a humming-bird and offered it to a mygale. But the mygale, instead of attacking the bird, retreated from it with fear or aversion. Confident in the result of his experiment, the naturalist scouted the story of the bird-eating spider! Yet it has been repeatedly confirmed since, and never was improbable. M. Moreau de Jonnés says that the South American mygale climbs trees, to devour the young humming-birds; and Mr. H. W. Bates saw in Brazil two little finches entangled in the web of a grey-brown mygale. The finches he judged to be male and female; one was dead, and the other was under the body of the hideous spider. Threads strong enough to hold birds may well be used for sewing purposes by ladies resident in hot countries abounding in such spiders. Even men of business have tried to turn spider silk to practical account. "M. Bon, a Frenchman, and M. Fremeyer, a Spaniard," says Mr. Blackwell, "have succeeded in fabricating stockings, gloves, purses, and other articles, of the silk produced by spiders; but the great voracity of these animals, and the difficulty experienced in providing them with food, have hitherto prevented this material from being made available for manufacturing purposes on an extensive scale." May it not be that the authors of these experimental enterprises have attempted too much? If it could be established that spider silk makes good silk thread, much would be gained for the use of mankind, although the material might never be made available for purses, gloves, or stockings. Curious calculations have been made in reference to the production, the relative production, of spider and caterpillar silk. A spider, it is said, lays six eggs for one egg laid by a moth, yet the moth makes twelve times as much silk as the spider. Two thousand three hundred and four caterpillars make as much silk as twenty-seven thousand six hundred and forty-eight spiders of the house-spider species. The proportional strength of the thread of the silk-moth and of the thread of a house-spider is said to be five to one in favour of the silk-moth. Spiders, moreover, are shockingly addicted to eating each other: a taste of which the silkworm is innocent. Many six-footed animals make silk, and only one species of them all has yet been discovered suitable for the purposes of the silk weaver—the silkworm of the mulberry-tree. The experiments with all the numerous other species have disappointed the sanguine hopes entertained. When we remember how little spiders have been hunted, collected, studied,

and bred, in comparison with butterflies—entomology being a popular, and arachnology an unpopular, science—may we not hope that a species of spider will yet be found yielding silk suitable for the manufacture of stockings, or gloves, or thread? This discovery awaits the successful student of all the spinning animals.

There are not merely mollusks which fasten themselves to rocks and seaweeds by means of cables of silken threads; there is a shell-fish which lets itself down from floating weeds in the ocean as the spider hangs by a thread from the bushes in the garden. This shell-fish is the *Litopa bombix* of Keiner and of Sandors Rang. The vast masses, large as islands, of seaweed which float upon the steaming surface of the tropical seas, have many strange inhabitants, and, among them, this little-known spinning periwinkle. Even the cable or byssus of the mussels, and the soft supple numerous and warm threads of the pinna, are fabrics the manufacture of which is but imperfectly known. The spinning apparatus of the mussel is situated at the base of what is called the foot; the spinning apparatus of most of the insects issues from the lower jaw; yet the silk ducts of the six-footed insects, called Myrmeleon, like those of all the eight-footed group, are located at the extremity of the abdomen. The word cocoon is properly enough applied to bags spun by spiders, for they are really egg-bags; but it is not correctly used when applied to the cases spun by insects, and into which they enclose themselves as in hammocks, or sleeping coffins, when passing from the state of larvae to the condition of chrysalides. Certain insects spin tents, in which they live in common; but it has only quite recently been proved that any spiders can co-operate to spin either a web or an abode. But both insects and spiders spin to shut up the cavities into which they retire, and to tie together the materials of which they build dwellings. A British spider has been seen often, and lost sight of now for a long time, which makes a raft on which it floats upon the surface of pools and ditches by tying dry weeds together. The Reverend Revett Shephard often noticed a very large spider which was wafted about on the watery surface of the ditches of Norfolk, upon a raft of weeds held together by silken cords. On spying an insect drowning in the water this spider quitted his raft for an instant to seize the prey, returning to it quickly to devour his victim at his leisure. But not merely does the raft serve the spider as a boat to float him into the vicinity of his game; it serves him as a screen to hide him from his enemies. Whenever he sees any danger approaching, he retires under his raft for safety until it is past.

Certain kinds of spiders have been known to eat their own silk, and M. Boitard says that the silk of their egg-bags is one of the earlier meals of the young garden-spiders. He saw the young of an *epeire porte-croix* (*Epeira diadema*) issue from their cocoon, and, after devouring the shells of their eggs, and the silk of a yellow

colour and thick loose texture of the bag, separate and disperse. These youngsters, it would appear, commence the business of silk weavers on a capital of their mother's web of silk. Many spiders, it is well known, if their webs be often broken, will swallow them to the last thread. An ordinary circular net of the garden-spider, says Mr. Blackwell, of fourteen or sixteen inches diameter, contains one hundred and twenty thousand tiny globules of liquid gum upon the concentric lines, and yet, when not interrupted, the spider weaves her net and fixes her thousands upon thousands of globules at exactly regular distances, in less than one hour. When seen under the microscope, and represented by photography, the regularity with which these adhesive globules are disposed, is scarcely less admirable than the mathematical exactitude of the forms of the cells of the honeycomb of the bee.

Spiders change their skins very often. According to the observations of Mr. Blackwell, one of the common house-spiders (*Tegenaria civilis*) changes nine times before arriving at maturity. These changes of their integuments are common to both sexes. They change once in the cocoon, and eight times after quitting it. This species is built to live four years.

As everybody has heard, spiders can live a long time without food. This power they owe to the fatty or adipose matter which fills the interstices between the organs in the abdomen. Held together with fine cellular tissue, this adipose matter serves as a reserve of nutriment for spiders against long fastings, like the tubers of certain plants. A female of the species called *Thiridion quadripunctatum* has been known to exist eighteen months in a closely corked phial.

Nothing is known respecting the hearing and smell of spiders. Taste they have, for they choose their food; and this sense is said to exist at the entrance of the pharynx, or opening to the gullet. They have considerable delicacy of touch: the sense belonging to their legs, or their palpi, or perhaps to both. Their eyes are simple and not compound, and they are short-sighted. Certain species can change the colour of their eyes, to express their emotions. Mr. Blackwell mentions that *Thomisus pallidus*, and one or two of its congeners, can, by a very perceptible internal motion, change the colour of the front intermediate pair of eyes from dark red brown to pale golden yellow.

Few persons are ignorant of the peculiarities of that structure of their feet which enable certain flies and spiders to climb smooth perpendicular surfaces, and walk on ceilings with their backs downward. The papillæ or tiny teats on their feet are arranged in the form of brushes or scapulæ. This structure is well exhibited by two common British species—*Drassus sericeus* and *Salticus senicus*. The brushes emit a viscous or adhesive secretion. Some species have also toothed claws, with hooks for grasping their lines, peculiarities which are well exhibited by the larger *epeiræ* under the microscope. The *ciniflonidæ* have combs or double

spines upon their hind legs for heckling or combing, twisting or curling, certain of their lines into the curls or flocculi characteristic of their snares.

The students of spiders have long differed in reference to their faculty of shooting forth their lines in a straight direction, and without the aid of any current of wind. Mr. Blackwell affirms that a current of air is indispensably necessary for this purpose. "Many intelligent naturalists," he says, "entertain the opinion that spiders can forcibly propel or dart out lines from the spinners; but when placed on twigs set upright in glass vessels with perpendicular sides, containing a quantity of water sufficient to immerse their bases completely, all the efforts they make to effect an escape uniformly prove unavailing in a still atmosphere. However, should the individuals thus insulated be exposed to a current of air, either naturally or artificially produced, they immediately turn the abdomen in the direction of the breeze, and emit from the spinners a little of their viscid secretion, which, being carried out in a line by the current, becomes connected with some object in the vicinity, and affords them the means of regaining their liberty. If due precaution be used in conducting this experiment, it plainly demonstrates that spiders are utterly incapable of darting lines from their spinners, as they cannot possibly escape from their confinement on the twigs in situations where the air is undisturbed, but in the agitated atmosphere of an inhabited room, they accomplish their object without difficulty. Similar means are frequently employed by spiders in their natural haunts for the purposes of changing their situation and fixing the foundation of their snares."

But fallacies lurk in generalities, and with all due deference to Mr. Blackwell, it must be said that he lays down the law too largely when he decides that "spiders," meaning all spiders, "are utterly incapable of darting lines from their spinners."

The different kinds of spiders have different kinds of spinnerets, adapted for different kinds of feats. The skin of the body of spiders consists of three layers; one, horny and hairy, and more or less transparent; another, soft and pigmentary; and a third, a network of muscular fibres adapted for compressing the abdomen. The spinnerets, which are generally six in number, are arranged in pairs. The hind pair is often prolonged, and three-jointed. There is in the ciniflonidæ a fourth pair planted in front, which are short, compressed, and unjointed. The spinnerets are moved by diverging bands of muscles connected with the surrounding skin. Inside the abdomen, nearer the base than the apex, there is a point opposite the orifice of the oviduct in the female, from which bands of muscles radiate. They keep the abdominal organs in their places, some of them being inserted into the skin both on the dorsal and ventral surfaces, and others running straight backward (in bundles of strongly striated fibres, like those moving the

legs) into the spinnerets. The silk is secreted in sacs or bags, and twisting or branching tubes of various shapes and sizes, each furnished with a distinct excretory duct, ending on the surface of the spinneret.

There are four varieties of spinning glands. There are, first of all, the glands found only in the ciniflonidæ. These glands consist of many tiny cells, each having a nucleus and a duct, which are situated just beneath the supplementary spinnerets, supplying them with the fine silk forming the flakelets or flocculi of the ciniflo (*Clubiona abrox* and *ferox*). All the spiders of this group at present known are natives of Europe, Madeira, Upper Canada, and South America. They select for their retreats crevices in rocks, walls, and trees; the insides of buildings, and the foliage of shrubs. Their snares are highly complicated, and distinguished by filaments which have been curiously curled by their combs.

The second variety of glands supply chiefly the front and hind pairs of spinnerets. These glands consist of an immense collection of oval or fusiform cells with fine elastic ducts secreting, probably, the finer threads of the webs and egg-bags.

The third variety of glands are often of a very large size, especially in the garden-spiders. They contain cartilaginous sacs or convoluted tubes, firm, hard, brittle, and transparent, with ducts which are not elastic. They are supposed to secrete the adhesive lines which are placed upon the geometric webs.

The fourth variety of silk glands most probably produce the gossamer of the flying or æro-nautic spiders, being numerous in *Lycosa saccata* and *Thomisus cristatus*. They consist of membranous sacs and tubes, some vermiform, others club-shaped, and others furnished with branched cæca or blind tubes. They have fibrous walls and elastic ducts, with a fibrous external coat, breaking into distinct rings when the duct is stretched. The sacs and ducts have a strong contractile and expulsive power. These glands probably secrete the stronger and larger lines which form the frames of the webs.

Mr. Meade, the author of these careful and minute observations upon the spinning glands, found that the glands and ducts of the last-mentioned kind of spiders were surrounded by a highly fibrous contractile coating, resembling the coating of the arteries in man and the higher animals. This contractile coating must enable the spiders to eject the silky fluid with considerable violence. I am able to confirm this physiological inference by the results of decisive experiments. Many years ago, having carefully excluded the air from my bedroom, I placed spiders upon the up-turned bottom of a teacup, and then put the cup, mouth downward, into the midst of a saucer full of water. Most of the spiders I tried this experiment upon went down the outside of the cup all round, and, when they felt the water, went up again, remaining there helpless, discouraged, and bewildered; but the particular spider in question,

no doubt one of the *Lycosidæ*, after ascertaining, like the rest, that he was surrounded with water on all sides, went up to the bottom of the cup, and slowly pushed out a straight stiff thread some five or six inches long, in a horizontal position. He pushed the thread slowly out, as if to give it time to stiffen. Still holding the thread straightly and horizontally out, he turned his abdomen to all the points of the compass, as if searching for something to lay hold of, or feeling for a breeze.

Spiders can do more than they have yet received credit for. An observer, of whose accuracy no one who knows him will entertain a doubt, told me that he once saw a garden-spider busy stretching his line from one shrub or bush to another. The wind being rather strong, the line oscillated more than the spider approved, and he accordingly steadied it to the ground by threads which he attached between it and small pebbles lying beneath it on the earth. This looks very like the sagacity and shiftiness which, in man, is called intelligence.

The tent of *Clotho Durandii* deserves special mention among the specimens exemplifying the ingenuity of spiders. This tent is formed at first of two sheets of the finest taffeta, to which the spider adds additional coverings when hatching her eggs. The outside sheet is soiled to conceal the tent; the inside is white, clean, downy, and warm. When compelled to leave her tent in search of food, this spider secures the outside sheets with fastenings of which she alone possesses the secret.

Spiders, mites, and scorpions, have little or nothing in common except eight feet. There are immense differences between the parasitic mites and the flying or diving spider; and between the demodex, found in the white matter squeezed from the human nose, or detected in the wax of the human ear, and the spider of the clay-tunnels, or the scorpions of hot climes, with their sting-bearing abdomens. Recent discoveries only bring into greater relief, the incongruities of the established classification. No mite was known to inhabit the sea until Professor Allman discovered one living as a parasite in the nostrils of a seal. He called it the *Halarachne*. It has no eyes, and has five thread-shaped feelers. It reminds one of demodex, by the length of the body and the proximity of the feet to the head. Mr. Gosse has since discovered two very minute species of mites, crawling about seaweed at extreme low water. The *Halacari* of Gosse have four legs in front and four behind. These marine animals are grouped with the spider because they have eight feet, although they do not spin.

Scorpions have stings instead of spinnerets in their abdomens. In their chief characteristics they differ vastly from mites and spiders. Scorpions suck the juices of their prey, pumping them into the alimentary canal, by contracting and relaxing the transverse muscles of the pharyngeal sac. If spiders preying upon insects may be called entomologists, scorpions

may be called both arachnologists and entomologists, for they hunt and kill both insects and spiders. From the description of eye-witnesses, it appears that large flies of the *musca*, or house-fly genus, are seized with an irresistible fury at the sight of the scorpion, which compels them to fly at it again and again. The scorpion remains on the wall, with its lobster-like claw outstretched to receive the fly, which, if so disposed, could easily escape. But, mad with fury, the fly darts against the crust of the scorpion, and rebounds from it with astonishment. After wheeling round as if in flight some two or three yards off, it stops and looks, and is again impelled to charge with fury. This unequal and fatal combat continues until the stunned, confused, and furious, fly is caught in the claws of the scorpion and eaten.

TO PARENTS.

GOING to and fro in the earth, and walking up and down in it (like the Devil in Job), it has sometimes occurred to me, that amidst the universal preaching of the duties of children to parents, a few words might well be said on the duties of parents to children. Can these few words do any harm? I trow not. The truth never does any harm. No child, blessed with even ordinarily good parents, will love and honour them any the less for whatever may be said against bad parents. And to try and sustain the authority of the latter by false pretences is as futile as setting up a fetish-idolatry instead of the true religion of the heart—that instinctive filial faith which is the foundation-stone of all law and order in the world. Nay, in the universe, for what would become of us in this weary existence, if we could not from its beginning to its ending, look up and say "Our Father"?

It is a solemn and terrible truth, that there are parents who no more deserve the name than the sovereign of Dahomey deserves to be held as a "king, by the grace of God." Yet in one sense the "divine right" of both kings and parents is unalienable. "Honour thy father and thy mother" is an absolute law, given without reference to the worthiness of the individual parent; it being a duty which the child owes to himself, to honour his parents simply as *parents*, without considering whether or not they have fulfilled their duty. There is a limit beyond which human nature cannot be expected to go: when actual moral turpitude renders "honour" a perfect farce; when respect becomes a mockery, and obedience an impossibility. But even then one resource remains—and remains for ever—endurance and silence. The unworthy parent must be treated like the unworthy king, tacitly handed down from the position which he has proved himself unfit to occupy, neither injured nor insulted, simply deposed.

But these are exceptional cases, so exceptional that each must be decided on its separate merits; and in most instances the outside public, which takes such delight in

criticising, condemning, or excusing it, is quite unfit to judge it at all. But there are innumerable other instances, not the "cruel fathers" or "heartless mothers" of fiction, but every-day, well-meaning, respectable people, who are nevertheless domestic Molochs, before whom every successive child must pass through the fire; ancient Remphans, requiring living human daily sacrifices—precious indeed, for all sacrifice is lovely in the offerer—but none the less an unnecessary and cruel immolation, which lookers-on must regard with both pity and righteous wrath.

In how many ways, ignorantly or carelessly, do parents thus act as actual scourges to the children who were given them, not for their personal amusement, benefit, or pride, but for the sake of the children themselves! How entirely they seem to forget that each human soul which is sent to them through the mysteries of marriage and birth, is not their own to do as they like with, but a solemn charge, for which they will be accountable to God and man! If any weaknesses of theirs, love of power, love of ease, even love of love—often the deepest selfishness of all—lead them to ignore this charge, woe be to them and their children. "Unto the third and fourth generation" is a law, not of divine anger, but of divine inevitable necessity. One wicked father, or vicious, vile-tempered mother, often remains a family curse for a century.

It is at once the most awful responsibility, and the utmost consecration of parenthood, that of all human ties, this one requires most self-abnegation. And when we think how very few really unselfish people there are in the world—not many among women, of men almost none—we only wonder how so many decent folk do contrive somehow to bring up decent families,—or let them bring themselves up, as strange to say, many excellent families often do. But the very fact that children left almost entirely to themselves sometimes turn out better than those who have been subjected to the sharpest parental oversight—only drives us back by implication to the truth at which we started—how few people are in the least fitted to be parents.

And perhaps no wonder. Young people falling desperately in love, marrying in haste and repenting at leisure; other people, not young, and certainly guiltless of any youthful follies, who commit the deliberate mature sin of making marriage a mere matter of convenience; husbands wearing out their bodies and souls in the making of money, and wives frittering away their helpless, aimless lives in the extravagant spending of it—what can such as these know or feel of the duties of parenthood?

At first it is a very pretty amusement, doubtless. How delighted papa is to make after-dinner pets of his fairy girls, and encourage the obstreperousness of his fine manly boys. And mamma, with a certain natural instinct that rarely fails even in the silliest of women, is a tolerably good mother so long as her children remain in the nursery. But when they grow into youths and maidens, requiring larger wisdom, a tenderer guidance; when individual character

asserts itself, as it will and must, in any creature worth becoming a man or a woman—then is the crisis—most difficult and dangerous—at which, alas, so many household histories break down.

The transition state of adolescence is a trying time. The young folks, like all half-grown animals, are awkward, unwise, self-conceited, revolutionary; while the elders find it hard to believe that "the children" are, in reality, children no more; that characters have developed and tastes matured, very likely most opposite to their own, yet not necessarily inferior characters or erring tastes. Some minds, at once strong and narrow, find it nearly impossible to comprehend this. They do not perceive when the time comes, as come it must in every family, when it is the children's right to begin to think and act for themselves, and the parents' duty to allow them to do it; when it is wisest gradually to slacken authority, to sink "I command" into "I wish," to grant large freedom of opinion, and above all in the expression of it. Likewise, and this is a most important element in family union, to give license, nay, actual sympathy, to wandering affections, friendships, or loves, which, for the time being, seem to find the home circle too narrow and too dull.

No doubt, to the parents this is rather trying. It is hard for mamma to discover that her girl not only enjoys, but craves after, a month's visit in some lively household; that she likes the company of other girls, and forms enthusiastic friendships, which mamma (a lady of between fifty and sixty) forgets that she herself ever had, and consequently thinks exceedingly silly, or idle, or wrong. Papa, too, cannot see why his boys—good, affectionate lads—should find it such dull work to stay at home of an evening, or should prefer a sensation play—"so different from what the stage was in my time"—to the longest game of chess with himself, or the most learned conversation with his staid and sober friends. Yet all this is quite natural; the boys and girls are foolish, perhaps, but not in the least guilty. Well for the household in which this, the earliest of many impending changes, should be recognised at once, still better that the recognition should come first from the elder and wiser side of it.

But, alas, here intrudes a truth which should be touched reverently and delicately, and yet it cannot be passed over, for it is a truth—that all parents are *not* wiser than their children. Sometimes a boy, quick-witted, honest, and good, finds, as he grows up, that his father is not a man to be relied on, but one of those weak souls who, without positive harm in them, are ever sinking lower and lower, and dragging their family down with them—whose authority is a mere name, whose advice is fatal to follow. Many a clever lad has come to see, even before he is out of his teens, that his only chance of getting on in the world is to rely solely on himself, and give as wide a berth as possible to his natural guardian and guide—his father. Likewise, many a girl, generous, warm-hearted, and sensitive, on passing into discriminating

womanhood, feels, and cannot help feeling, that if her mother had not been her mother, she would never have chosen her even as an ordinary acquaintance. These are bitter discoveries, ending in sharp daily agonies, irremediable, incommunicable. Happily the instinctive natural bond, added to the familiar habit of a lifetime, is so strong, that sometimes the sufferers themselves do not seem to feel their position quite so keenly as lookers-on do, who own no softening influence of custom or affection.

These sufferings are none the less real because they sometimes take the comical aspect. Witty writers have exhausted their wit on the sad spectacle, common enough in this commercial country, of parvenus, coarse and vulgar, who are perfect terrors to their educated children. But this is a small misfortune. A man seldom raises himself very high without having something to give to society equivalent to what he has won from it. Hundreds now-a-days carry with them into handsome houses, noble halls, and even palace doors, the traces of their humble origin—not pleasant, indeed, and sometimes comical,—but quite bearable, from the inherent worth or talent of the individual, and never warranting the slightest complaint or disrespect from a dutiful child. Far worse to bear is that ingrained coarseness of nature, not breeding, common to all ranks, which makes many a daughter blush scarlet at things her mother says and does, which yet she can neither prevent nor notice. And what can be sorer for a young man, high-minded and chivalrous, than to live in perpetual dread lest his father, the head of the house, should disgrace it by some small meanness, some "indirect crook't ways," which force any honest observer, even his own son, to perceive, that though he may be a Cressus of money, or a nobleman in rank, he is certainly not a gentleman?

Between these opposite poles of tragedy and comedy lies an intermediate range of miseries, small indeed, but sorely hard to bear. One is when, as is patent to everybody except the parents themselves, the elder generation is, in mental and moral calibre, decidedly inferior to the younger. Not bad people, but only narrow: narrow in thought, and word, and deed; unable to recognise that what lies beyond their own limited vision has any existence whatsoever. These sort of people are very trying in all relations, the more so because, so far as they go, they are often exceedingly estimable. Only if nature has made one of their children in any way different from themselves, of larger mould and wider capacities, the extent to which that child is martyred, even with the very best intentions, is sometimes incredible.

Yet outside, everybody says what excellent parents they are, and what a happy home their children must have! a fact of which they themselves are most thoroughly convinced. How can the young people weary of it for a moment? How can Mary, a charming, well educated, and perhaps very clever young woman, desire any other companion than her mother? Of course a mo-

ther is the best and closest companion for every girl. Most true, but not "of course," nor in virtue of the mere accident of motherhood. Sympathy comes by instinct, and confidence must be, not exacted, but won. Mary may have the strongest filial regard for that dear and good woman, to whom she owes and is ready to pay every duty that a daughter ought, and yet be inwardly conscious that nature has made the two so different in tastes, feelings, disposition, that if she were to open her heart to her, her mother would not understand her in the least. Not to speak of the difference of age, greater or less, and the not unnatural way in which elderly people who do not retain youthfulness of heart, as happily many do to the last day of life, grow out of sympathy with the young. But Providence having constituted these two mother and daughter, they must get on together somehow. And so they do. Though Mary in her secret soul may writhe sometimes, she loves mamma very dearly, and would love her better still if she would only let her alone to follow her own tastes in any lawful way. But this mamma cannot do. She is like the goose with the young cygnet, always pitying herself that her child is so unlike other people's children, wearing the girl's life out with endless complaints and impossible exactions, until at last Mary sinks into passive indifference, or bitter old-maidism, or plunges into a reckless marriage—anything, anywhere, only to get away from home.

John's case is not so hard, in one sense, he being a man and Mary only a woman, but it is far more dangerous. She may be made merely wretched; he wicked, by this narrow vexatious rule. Why should John, who is only three-and-twenty, presume to hold a different opinion on politics, religion, or aught else, from his father? Papa is the older, and of course knows best; papa has had every opportunity of forming his judgment on every subject; and he has formed it, and there it is, carefully cut and dried, easy and comfortable, without any of those doubts which are the torture and yet the life of all ardent, youthful spirits. There it is, and John must abide by it, hold his tongue, and take his obnoxious newspapers and heterodox books out of the way; which John, being a lover of peace, and trained to honourable obedience, very likely does; but he cherishes either a private contempt—we are so scornful when we are young!—or an angry rebellion against the narrow-mindedness that would compel him into his father's way of thinking, simply because it is his father's. Be the lad ever so good, a lurking sense of injustice cannot fail to chafe him, and injustice is one of the most fatal elements that, at any age, can come into the sacred relation between parent and child.

Parents know not what they are doing when they rouse this feeling—the burning, stinging consciousness of being unfairly treated, disbelieved, misjudged, selfishly or wantonly punished. You find it in the maddest mob, the roughest public school, the most riotous public assembly,

this rough, dogged sense of justice ; dangerous to tamper with, even in the slightest degree. Far wiser is it for a parent to acknowledge to ever so young a child, "I was wrong, I made a mistake," than to go on enforcing a false authority, or compelling a blind obedience, driving the child to exclaim, or only feel, which is worse, "You are not my ruler, but my tyrant!"

Yet many a severe parent is deeply loved. "My father was a stern man," you sometimes hear said, while the rare tear of self-restrained middle age falls unchecked over the grave's side. "He kept us in order. We were all rather afraid of him; but he was invariably just. He never broke his word, nor forgot his promise. He punished us, but not in passion: he ruled us strictly, but it was never to gratify his own love of power. If he had thrashed us twenty times, we should have submitted to it, because we knew that whatever he did was done for conscience' sake, and not out of wantonness or anger. I may bring up my children differently in some things—perhaps I do—but I'll never hear a word said against him. He was a just man—my father."

A just man, and an unselfish woman; these are the two first qualities which constitute true parenthood.

In this question of selfishness. Readers may start with horror at such an impossible anomaly as a selfish mother, a jealous exacting father; and yet such there are. Especially after the children are grown up, and nature, gratitude, and the world's opinion, all agree that no devotedness can be too perfect, no sacrifices too great. Ay! but it is one thing what the child ought to offer, and another what the parent should accept. Most lovely is it to see a daughter cheerfully resigning all the external enjoyments of life, to devote herself to the higher happiness of being the sole stay and cheer of some helpless father, or solitary sickly mother; and sweet, even amid all its daily renunciations, is the sense of duty fulfilled and comfort imparted. But to see a parent fretful, complaining, exacting, grudging the child a week's absence from home, not for love, *that* would teach self-sacrifice, but from the selfish enjoyment or ease that the accustomed companionship brings, yielding to the natural dislike of old age for any new association, and tacitly or openly keeping the young people in such bondage that they dare not ask a friend to tea, or accept an invitation—"Papa would not like it;" "Mamma might be annoyed"—this is a sight which lowers all the dignity of parenthood, and degrades filial duty into mere servitude. Yet many such cases there are, inflicted by really good parents, who are not aware that they are doing any harm, and who, in their narrow selfishness, cannot perceive that the life which is to them merely "a quiet life," suited to their age and infirmities, is slowly taking all the spirit and brightness out of younger hearts, driving the boys into dissipation and folly, and dragging "the girls" (of thirty and upwards) down into premature old-maidism, dull, discontented, help-

less, and forlorn. Such a life, passing gradually on into life's melancholy decline, in a round of uninteresting, compelled duties, is as different from the free warm devotion of real filial love, as slow murder is from voluntary and glad self-sacrifice.

But here a word, lest this essay, which is especially addressed "To Parents," not being guarded, like income-tax or census papers, from any other unlawful eyes, should be taken as a loophole of excuse by readers like a certain young impertinent of my acquaintance, who, being lectured on the text, "Children obey your parents in the Lord," immediately pointed out its correlative, "Fathers, provoke not your children to anger."

When we speak of a parent being "deposed," we mean merely from the exercise of an authority which has become a farce, and the exaction of an obedience which a higher law, that of conscience, renders impossible. But once a parent, always a parent. It is a bond which, though in one sense a mere accident, is, in another sense, stronger than any tie of mere personal election, since it came by the ordination of Providence. It may be a great burden, even a great misfortune, but there it is: and nothing but death can end it. No short-comings on the parental side can abrogate one atom of the plain duty of the child—submission so long as submission is possible, reverence while one fragment of respect remains; and, after that, endurance. To this generation of Young England, which is apt to think so much of itself, and so little of its elders and superiors, we cannot too strongly uphold the somewhat out of date doctrine, "Honour thy father and thy mother." Ay, though they may be very simple, common people: infirm in intellect, uneducated, unrefined: guilty of many short-comings of temper, judgment, and even glaring errors—still, honour them, and, when honour fails, bear with them.

The question then arises, what, and for how long, a child ought to bear. And here Christianity would reply with the doctrine of "seventy times seven," pleading, also, that if to a brother so much is to be forgiven, how much more so to a parent? Ay, *forgiven*. But Christianity nowhere commands that a grown-up man or woman is to sacrifice honour, conscience, peace—in fact, the real worth of a lifetime—to either brethren or parents. Therefore, when things come to this pass, that the child by "honouring" the parent would actually dishonour God, and defile his own soul by acting contrary to his conscience, there, so far, the duty ends. Let him or her assert, as an individual existence, the right of self-preservation—let them part. At least let the division be made firm and clear enough to secure independence of thought and action, so that the parent can no longer injure or oppress the child.

For lesser trials, the amount of patience and long-suffering shown by the child to the parent ought to be almost unlimited. At the same time, it is quite possible for young men or young women quietly to assert their individuality, and carry out, without any obnoxious rebellion, their

own plan of life, even if it does differ more or less from their parents. Exceeding gentleness and yet firmness, perfect respect in word and deed, straightforwardness, honesty, and yet a courageous self-dependence, will rarely fail to win their way under ever such difficult circumstances. And one hardly knows which to despise most—the cowardice which looks like reverence, and the underhandedness which shams obedience, or that open rebellion which hastily assumes the position, more degrading to itself than to the worst of parents—that of a “thankless child.”

One word more, on that prime source of misery between parents and children: marriage.

Unquestionably, if any third human being has a right to interfere in the choice which two other human beings make of one another “for better, for worse,” it is a parent. No one else! neither brother, sister, aunt, uncle, cousin, nor any of the numerous relations and friends who always seem to consider a projected marriage their especial business, and not that of the lovers at all. But, happily, in our country at least, none of these, nay, not even parents, have absolute legal authority, either to make or to mar the divine institution of holy matrimony. Either John or Mary may, having arrived at years of discretion, at any time walk out of the paternal house and into the nearest church, or register office, and marry anybody. And if the marriage be at all creditable, even society will wink at it; nay, perhaps smile at the “indignant parents.” But a higher law than that of society enacts that such a decided step should not be taken until the last extremity.

Most natural are all the hesitations, doubts, pathetic little jealousies, and pardonable touchinesses of parents about to lose their children. It is hard to see your winsome girl, the flower of your life, plant herself, in her very sweetest bloom, in another man's garden. Hard, too, to watch your best loved son so absorbed that he has neither eyes nor ears for mother, sister, or any creature living, except “that young woman.” Nevertheless, that a man should leave father and mother and cleave unto his wife, is a law so immutable, so rational, that those who selfishly set their faces against it, parents though they be, are certain to reap their punishment. They may live to see sons, whom they have thwarted in a pure first love, turn to a coarse passion degrading and destroying to body and soul; daughters, denied a comparatively humble engagement with some honest penniless lover, fretfully “withering on the virgin thorn,” or seeking loveless worldly marriages, which are the crushing out of all womanliness, everything that by making life happy, would also have made it worthy.

Sons and daughters will marry, and they ought to marry. Selfishness alone would hinder in any young man the lawful desire for a home of his own, or in any young woman the natural instinct for some one dearer than father, mother, brother, or sister, however precious these all may be. Every head, and every member of a family who loves the other members wisely and well, will not only not prevent, but encourage in

every lawful way, the great necessity of life to both men and women, a prudent, constant, holy love, and a happy marriage.

One word to the parents, which of course the young people are not intended to hear.

Don't you think, my good friends, that parents as you be, with every desire for your child's happiness, it was a little unfair to give your Mary every opportunity of becoming attached to Charles, and Charles, poor fellow, all possible chance of adoring Mary? Could you expect him to see her sweet womanly ways, which make her the delight of her father's home, and not be tempted to wish her for the treasure of his own? Is it not rather hard now to turn round and object to their marrying, because, forsooth, you “never thought of such a thing,” or, “Mary might have done better,” or, “Charles was not the sort of person you thought she would fancy,” or—last shift and a very mean one—you “rather hoped she would not marry at all, but stay with her old father and mother”?

Hold there! We will not suppose any parents in their sober senses to be guilty of such sinful selfishness. Let us pass to the next objection, commonly urged against almost all marriages, that the parties are the last persons which each was expected to choose. Expected by whom? The world at large, or their own relations? The world knows little enough, and cares less, about these matters. And sometimes, strange to say, two people who happen really to love one another, also know one another, a little better than all their respected relations put together—even their parents. They have made (or ought to—for we are granting that the case in point is no light fancy, but a deliberate attachment—there is great meaning in that old-fashioned word) that solemn election, binding for life, and—as all true lovers hope and pray—for eternity. They have cast their own lot, and are ready to abide by it. All its misfortunes or mistakes, like its happinesses, will be their own. Give your advice honestly and fully; exact a fair trial of affection, urge every precaution that your older heads and tougher hearts may suggest, and then, O parents, leave your children free. If there is one thing more than another in which sons and daughters who are capable of being trusted at all, deserve to be trusted unlimitedly, it is choice in marriage.

I have lived somewhat long in the world; have watched many a love affair “on” and “off,” gathering, rising, and breaking and vanishing like a wave of the sea; have seen many a strange union turn out well, and many a seemingly smooth and auspicious one end in much unhappiness; but I never saw any single instance in which overweening irrational passionate opposition to any marriage, on the part of parents or friends, did not end in misery. It either forced on to unsuitable and hasty union some fancy or passion that might otherwise have died a peaceful natural death, or it clouded, for years at least, two innocent lives; or if this were spared and the marriage accomplished, it sowed seeds of strife and bitterness between families

which no after pacification could ever quite root out. Parents, whatever you do, be humble enough never to attempt to play Providence with your children!

But suppose it is not so. Suppose that Mary's father forbids Mr. Charles his house, or Charles's kindred, having taken an insurmountable prejudice against Mary, swear that if he marries her they will never have anything more to say to him? What are the young couple to do? Are they to sacrifice the happiness of their mutual lives? Is Charles to sail for Australia, and Mary to go mourning all her days? Some strict moralists might say, "Yes. Break your hearts, both of you, but dare not to disobey your parents." Easy-going worldly-wise reasoners might agree that there would be no heart-break in the matter, that both would soon "get over it," and marry somebody else. Possibly; but the risk is considerable, involving great responsibility to the parents.

Also to the lovers themselves, who, from the instant that they have acknowledged mutual affection, have a right to one another and a duty to perform to one another, little less sacred than that of husband and wife. Their trial is no doubt most sharp—hard in the present, sad in the future—for how bitter it must be to give to possible children the opportunity of one day saying, "You married without your parents' consent—you cannot blame me if I do the same." Yet, granting its full weight to every argument, the decision arrived at in so cruel a conjuncture must, in all calmly judging minds, be surely one and the same.

Unquestionably, a deliberate, patiently-delayed, well-thought-of marriage, open to no rational objection, and breaking no law either human or divine, ought to be carried out, with or without the consent of parents.

No clandestine proceedings can ever be justifiable. But when all efforts to break down prejudice and win esteem have failed, a son, or even a daughter, though that seems harder, has a perfect right to quit, openly and honestly, the parental roof. "Farewell," either must say—ah how sorrowfully! yet it ought to be said—"I have tried my utmost to win you over, and it is in vain. I am not called upon to sacrifice not only my own happiness but another's. The just God be judge between us. I must go."

A terrible alternative, yet there can be no other; and surely if the parents never relent—never forgive—the just God would judge it tenderly, and the "curse causeless" would not come.

But such a crisis rarely occurs in a family where the parents have themselves done their duty. No wise father would ever bring into the intimate society of his daughters a young fellow of whom, as a son-in-law, he would utterly, and with fair reasons, disapprove. And, reckless as men's passions sometimes are, very few sons of really good mothers would be likely so to have lost that ideal of womanhood which it is a mother's own fault if she does not set before all her sons, that they would desire to bring into the family any girl so altogether unworthy and objectionable that her

entrance therein ought to be prevented by every lawful means. The safest and only way to make children marry rightly is by setting before them such ensamples of true manhood and womanhood that they would shrink from choosing a wife or husband inferior to their father or mother.

And when such is the case, when home is really home, what a haven of rest it is! How the children, married or single, will remember it, yearn over it, delight to revisit it, as the safest, sunniest nest. And as years roll on, and they have long ceased to be "the children" to anybody but the old father and mother, how strong is that parental influence which has succeeded the resigned authority—how perfect the love which casts out even the shadow of fear. Duty—sacrifice—the words are a mere name, a pleasant jest, if by means of them can be given the smallest pleasure to the good parents. No self-denial seems too great if it can requite them—no, they never can be requited—but show them in some degree their children's appreciation of their innumerable self-denials, never fully understood till now, when the children have become parents themselves.

And when they really grow old—though the second generation will never quite believe it—how their weaknesses are held sacred, and their utmost infirmities dear. How the third generation are taught from babyhood to consider it the greatest honour to be of any use to grandpapa and grandmamma. How their sayings are repeated, their wisdom upheld, and their virtues canonised into a family tradition, ay, years after the beloved heads, white and reverend, have been laid tenderly "under the daisies."

For parents, real parents, are never forgotten. Good old maids and kindly old bachelors may be remembered for many a year; but those others on whom has been conferred, with all the sorrows and cares, the great honour and happiness of parenthood, have mingled their life with the permanent life of the world. Their qualities descend, and their influence is felt, through uncounted generations. Thorny and difficult may have been their mortal path, many their anxieties and sharp their pangs, but they have done their work, and they inherit its blessing. They die, but in their posterity they enjoy a perpetual immortality.

NORWEGIAN SOCIALITY.

It was five o'clock on a Tuesday morning when I arrived in Christiania. I had with me a letter of introduction to a Norwegian gentleman, one of the most hospitable fellows I ever met with. We were good friends directly.

"My friend tells me," he said, glancing over the contents of the letter, "that you want to see something of our town life before going up country. Nothing could be more fortunate. I am giving a ball to-night, so come and make your observations on us. By the way," he added, "take this," giving me a pink piece of paper, with the following printed on it:

"Herr H. giver sig den Ære at indbyde Herr
—til en soirée dansante. Tirsdagen den —
"Kol. 7."

Which, being interpreted, is:

"Mr. H. gives himself the honour to invite, &c. &c.

"Seven o'clock."

At the time appointed I arrived at my friend's house, for I purposely came early in order to be able to scrutinise the company. And here, at the outset, I must remark that I was extremely taken with the Norwegian ladies—especially the young ladies. Not that they were beautiful; our English girls far surpass their Norwegian sisters in respect of good looks. But in the first place I refer to their "get-up," of which, for my lady readers, I will endeavour to give a true, though, I fear, not a scientific description. Nearly all of them were dressed in muslin, white or coloured, with appropriate head-dresses of flowers or ribbons. There was scarcely an expensive dress in the whole room. "Sensible girls!" I soliloquised. "I wonder what it would cost my sisters to turn out for a ball like this? I should like some of our English young ladies to be here, to take a lesson in dress. Here is a good effect produced for a very little money." But here my reflections were directed into another vein by a bevy of young men, students, officers, and so forth, who came in hat in hand. What on earth do they bring their hats into a ball-room for? Ah! perhaps they are afraid of losing them. Not a bad idea! But I wonder what they will do with them when the dancing begins? Surely not put them on? However, after having paid their respects to the host, they proceeded carefully to place them in out-of-the-way corners, while others, who did not, I suppose, mean dancing, kept theirs in hand for the rest of the evening.

Just then the folding-doors of an adjacent room were thrown open, and supper was announced.

Another surprise for me. What! Supper before dancing! So it was. And an excellent plan, too, I'm inclined to think. For, don't you, young ladies, always enter into the spirit of dancing all the more, after you have had a little sip of iced champagne? Don't you, young gentlemen, often then first get rid of that shyness and reserve which are so peculiar to you? You know you do.

The supper was an elegant affair; but a standing-up one, as is universally the case in Norway. As I had only just dined, I became a passive spectator. I observed that the gentlemen, as soon as they had handed their partners in, left them to shift for themselves, while they looked after number one. But the dear creatures seemed quite used to such treatment. There were no sweets on the table; all the dishes were savoury dishes. (By the way, Russian peas seemed very popular.) But in another little room were laid out ices, jellies, creams, cakes, flanked by numberless bottles of champagne. The ladies had the first entrée into the Chamber of Sweets, and it was not till they turned out, that we turned in.

The band now began to strike up in the ball-room: a signal for the gentlemen to adjourn thither.

"You dance?" said my host.

"Oh yes; certainly!"

"Come, then. I'll introduce you to that girl in pink; she is dying to dance with an Englishman."

She was an uncommonly charming girl, the daughter of a pastor in the Loffoten Isles, and had never been in Christiania before. She rejoiced in the name of Katinka. I naturally thought she might be shy, as this was the first time she had ever been in a town. Not a bit of it! She had plenty to say for herself; could talk English very well, though she had never heard it spoken by an Englishman before; and was thoroughly well up in English literature.

I never danced so much, nor enjoyed an evening so much, as I did this evening, my first in Northern Europe. It is quite impossible to help liking the young ladies. They are so simple, unreserved, conversational, well informed, and un-coquettish.

Dancing was kept up with spirit till twelve, when another edition of supper on a minor scale made its appearance.

"Well! And what do you think of us in this out-of-the-way country?" said my friend, who prevailed on me to stay behind and smoke a cigar after his guests had gone.

"Think! I think I would like to cut the Temple, and come and live here for good and all!"

He laughed, and said, as I took my leave,

"By the way, I forgot to tell you I have been requested to bring you with me to-morrow to a grand dinner-party. You'll see something new there, if I mistake not. *God Nat!*"

After bathing next morning in the Fjord, in close proximity to his Majesty Carl John the Fifteenth—when I had an opportunity of seeing rather more than one usually sees of royalty—I repaired to my friend's house, to be taken out to dinner.

The Statsraad W. lived during the summer in a villa about half a mile from town. Indeed, nearly all the merchants and wealthier people reside in the country during the summer months. These villas, which I noticed as presenting a very picturesque effect, on sailing up the Fjord, are generally built of wood, and painted either a pale pink, white, or yellow. From the second or third stories there are balconies, and on the ground floor there is a verandah, connected by glass doors with the house. One never sees a carpet during the summer, and not usually even in the winter. The floors are painted and varnished, and convey to the mind an assurance of coolness and absence of dust: desirable advantages in a climate which, for a short time in the year, resembles that of India.

There were, perhaps, a hundred and fifty guests assembled when we entered. I wondered how we were all going to be accommodated.

"I dare say you do not have these sort of dinner-parties in England," said a young lady to

me, whom I had met the evening before. "We always, at such parties, stand up to dinner." My answer was cut short by our being ushered into the dining-room.

As I wished to do at Rome as they did at Rome, I first turned to a little side-table, on which were arranged sardines, anchovies, "Throndbjem aquavit," and other appetite-ticklers. I won't describe the dinner; suffice it to say, it was most excellent. But I would earnestly recommend any one going to Christiania, to practise dining standing up before leaving home; for it requires an uncommon knack to be able to manage it properly. Try; take a plate with a bit of chicken, a slice of ham, some peas, and potatoes on it, for instance. Hold this in your left hand—for all the chairs and side-tables are monopolised by the elderly people—and cut up and eat with your right. In the mean time, keep constantly drinking wine with imaginary guests, and get your sisters to push gently up against you from all sides. And withal you should not omit to pay some attention to the study of attitudes. Assume the best posture for preserving your "gravity in a state of stability," while at the same time seek to avoid a straddle, as if you were on the deck of a rolling steamer, otherwise you may be animadverted on by the company. You must not feel annoyed if, just as you have succeeded in cutting up the chicken and ham in nice little bits, and have relinquished the knife for the fork, a jolt from behind disturbs the direction a mouthful is taking, and sends it outside your shirt-front instead of inside. Neither must you be irritated at feeling that some one is pouring a plateful of gravy down your back. I upset a glass of wine over a young gentleman's legs (an elderly man of stout basis, who bumped against me, was the cause), and I am ashamed to say that I looked hard in another direction, as if I knew nothing at all about the matter. Another piece of advice I would venture to suggest—especially if you dislike using dirty forks—is, that you keep a tight hold of your own. Forks are always at a premium, and if you put yours down for one moment, you'll never see it again. I cannot suggest the modest stranger's doing anything better with his wine-glass than putting it in his pocket when not in immediate use; for I am convinced that not one of the ladies or gentlemen present drank out of the same glass twice.

After dinner, which was over about six, the gentlemen strolled out into the grounds to smoke. The ladies don't at all object to the smell of the fragrant weed, and nearly all the clergy indulge in it. You can judge for yourself, when I inform you that in 1855, when the population consisted of one million four hundred and ninety thousand and forty-seven souls—I like exactitude—the imports of tobacco amounted to about three millions three hundred thousand pounds; which gives an allowance of two pounds and a quarter to each soul, not deducting women or children. One gentleman to whom I was introduced informed me that he

always had a smoke the last thing at night, after he had got into bed; and, from some incidental remarks he made, I discovered that he was a married man, and occupied the same apartment as his wife. Cigars, coffee, and its attendant Curraço, having been duly appreciated, we returned to the house, and danced till twelve o'clock. And though the party had thus lasted eight hours, it had been throughout an uncommonly pleasant one, and the time had passed very quickly.

"As you have now seen what we can do in the way of balls and dinner-parties," said my friend, as we strolled home in the soft twilight (for it was so light, that I could easily have read the smallest print), "you shall see us as we are every day. I will take you to a friend's house to-morrow, and will not tell him anything about it beforehand."

If the dinner-party the day before had been costly and profuse, the fare to-day was homely, and rather sparing. The dinner consisted of fish-soup—a dish my pen is quite unable to describe, but which I should pronounce very nasty; roast chickens stuffed with parsley, about the size of partridges; and Multer-berries and cream. As a rule, Norwegian families do not eat meat more than three or four times a week; and a pudding—at least what an Englishman calls a pudding—is unknown.

Dinner being finished, as if at a preconcerted signal, everybody arose and pushed (not lifted) his chair back against the wall, thus producing an immense deal of unnecessary noise on the uncarpeted floor. And then everybody shook hands with the host, and with everybody else, and said, "Tak for Mad."

I was amused by an anecdote an English lady who had married a Norwegian told me. It seems they resolved upon living as much as possible in the English style, and therefore had meat and pudding every day. The servant had the same fare. But she could not eat it; she pined after her milk-soup, salt herrings, and potatoes; and actually lodged a complaint with the police against her master, because he *would* give her meat and pudding instead.

I should like to take Jeames, or John Thomas, or Betty the cook, over to Norway, and treat them to servants' fare there. A month or two of it would do them all a world of good! How they would appreciate the cold leg of mutton when they got back; and how heartily table-ale at tenpence a gallon would be relished after nothing but coffee and cold water!

THE STORY OF THE STONE-EYES.

CHAPTER I.

THE romance of the railway has seldom furnished a more extraordinary narrative than that which I now compile from the hasty jottings of my note-book, in June, eighteen hundred and fifty-eight.

I had made a random dash at a distant point by a certain cross-country railway, whose eccentric sinuosities, surpassing my very worst anticipations, finally deposited me on a deserted platform—Something's Den—then, withdrawing

into an adjacent shed, gloomily expired. The engine departed to its rest in a grass-grown siding, the driver to his, in a cottage beyond human ken—"aside of them rises"—pointing in the direction of a mountainous country, apparently about five miles distant.

No station-master was visible. Howbeit, an elderly hermit, in the costume of a porter of the Victorian age, patiently explained to me the fact that, having overpassed my proper "junction," I had before me a residence at the Den of four hours thirty-two minutes.

What to do? The landscape was unattractive; besides, it drizzled, mizzled—what is the damp expression that signifies a substance equidistant between nothing and rain? Books I had none, nor even a penknife, wherewith to improve the time and trees. There was, it is true, on the wall of the station itself, a small but choice collection of high art. Thence I learned how that Sampson Barkwise Pecklebody (address in full), having, one fatal morn (specified), permitted himself to occupy a certain class of carriage not usually associated with the description of ticket he had previously taken, was mulcted by indignant justices (set forth) in the unmitigated penalty of Thirty Shillings and costs—the permanent proclamation of which little incident, on the wall, must have imparted a peculiar interest to Mr. Pecklebody's subsequent journeyings by that line.

The Bed sent by Post—not only sent, but actually prepaid—perpetual enigma to the untravelling mind—presented its graceful form. Leisure there was to ponder why Messrs. Kornymen should alone dispense the pure article. Whether those gentlemen found it a commercial success, or whether a proud sense of moral rectitude was their sole reward. Ha! Frith? No. It is but a bold episode of London life, by a hand unknown, importing pictorially that Messrs. Bobbs and Thirkettle have engaged two-thirds of the western side of Regent-street for the display of their unrivalled assortment of summer stuffs. A royal equipage has just rolled heavily from the door, surcharged with purchases. The Lord Mayor, dissatisfied with eastern establishments, comes prancing up, attended (as usual, on shopping expeditions) by his faithful sheriffs, and other civic functionaries, among whom I think I faintly recognise the toastmaster. Three officers of her Majesty's Life Guards, in complete cuirass, about to enter in quest of their summer stuffs, make way for a right reverend dignitary, his wife, and a procession of fair daughters, so extended that it has to be continued round the corner.

"As the literature of Something's Den is quite capable of being exhausted before train-time, allow me to contribute to it," said a pleasant voice beside me.

The speaker, a man about sixty, perfectly gentlemanlike in appearance and address, had stepped out from the booking-office, and was offering me a handful of papers.

"Two poor fellows marooned on this inhospitable shore," he continued, laughing, "need

not stand on any ceremony, I think. It will be a good three hours before succour reaches us."

We gradually slid into conversation, pacing up and down the sheltered portion of the platform. The stranger talked easily and agreeably. I had seldom met with an Englishman who overcame, with such unobtrusive facility, the reserve of first acquaintance. An hour flew past, and, before its expiration, we had become as old and intimate friends.

The weather had by this time cleared a little, and there had become visible the grey top of an old mansion, with one tower, half smothered in fine woodland, covering a slope some two miles off.

"Whose residence is that, yonder?" inquired my companion of the hermit-porter, who, seated on a retired bench, was dropping a sharp-pointed knife, with singularly inaccurate aim, at a disabled humble-bee, squatted on the soft boards. Having, at the moment, nearly got the range of his victim, the hermit did not deem it expedient to suspend his fire, but simply replied that he didn't justly know. "'Twarn't nobody's. There was—summat wrong. Ghosts 'fested it—leastways, them top rooms—Gardener's wife—below. (The bee, suddenly impressed with a vague presentiment of danger, gave a convulsive shudder, and drew up one leg.) Never heerd the rights on it. However, nobody can't—live—(bee disovered longitudinally, presenting the remarkable appearance of two half bees in animated conversation)—live there, they can't."

"I was curious," observed the stranger, as we turned away, "to hear what he would say. That place is Mournivale, the scene of one of the most extraordinary series of incidents that ever found place in England's domestic annals. If you wish it, seeing that we have abundant time, I will give you the substance of the history."

CHAPTER II.

THIRTY years ago (resumed my friend), I commenced my professional career of medicine, with the ridiculous blunder of purchasing what is popularly called the "good will" of this district. I could have had it on precisely the same terms on which my predecessor had created it. My neighbours were benevolence itself, and—short of being at any time, within my recollection, in the least indisposed—did everything in their power to make me comfortable and happy. There was excellent trout fishing, of which certain industrious otters, and myself, seemed sole proprietors; and between us the best feeling always prevailed, they sparing my favourite pools, and I delicately avoiding the immediate neighbourhood of their dwellings; while my practice, which comprised two healthy farms, a robust toll-house, and the beer-shop, left ample leisure for my favourite sport, besides watching my busier neighbours.

Do not imagine that the parties I have referred to represented the entire population of the district. Somewhere among the trees lurk two little villages, one, in right of its superior size,

known as Great Covey, the other, availing itself of the fact of its dozen dwellings being disposed in two ranks, calling itself Covey-le-Street. The spirit of rivalry between these two powerful communities was constantly breaking out in various ways, and so bitter was the jealousy, that, at one period, scarcely any intercourse was permitted between them: a state of things the more to be regretted, since (a curious fact) the society of the greater Covey was composed almost entirely of bachelors, while that of Covey-le-Street embraced exclusively ladies yet unsummoned from the awaiting ranks of spinsterhood.

With this little non-community I had no personal concern. The whole was presided over by one of the bachelor brethren, who, tolerated as a necessary evil, went and came between the two camps, a just object of jealousy and suspicion to both. Charley Tincture was by nature a merry pleasant little fellow, and, being only fifty-seven, was looked upon by the elder brethren of Great Covey as little more than a boy. Nevertheless, it was now thirty-five years since Charley had been jilted, and had cast from his soul every thought of matrimony. Many a pleasant evening have I passed in Charley's society, at his snug lodging over the post-office (he was rich enough to have had a good house to himself, but preferred that celibate flavour which attaches to lodgings), and to this circumstance I owe the power of making you acquainted with the story of Mournivale.

The vast old mansion, after being for some time untenanted, had, just before my arrival, passed into the absolute possession of Sir George Corsellis. This gentleman had held a high military post in India, and had brought home a reputation the reverse of prepossessing. He was represented as a stern proud individual, gloomy and unsocial in disposition, a tyrant in his profession, a tyrant in his home. He had (said rumour, coming down like a black mist before him) resigned his command, in the hope of averting a threatened inquiry into some undue exercise of authority—something, it was even whispered, scarcely distinguishable from what men call murder—and he had come hither, with his lady, intending, if unmolested, to pass the remainder of his days among the deep woods of Mournivale.

The very first proceedings of the new proprietor were singular enough to provoke comment. He had fixed midnight for his arrival at the mansion with his family: directing the land-steward, Harper, who had managed the property for some years, and whom he had retained in office, to be in attendance at that hour, and alone.

Precisely at twelve, a hollow rumble of wheels came up from the grass-grown avenue, and Harper, throwing open the tall iron gates which gave immediate approach to the house, admitted a procession consisting of three gloomy old coaches, and a black van. From the first of these vehicles, alighted three dark figures, so closely muffled that it was only by a comparison of height that the steward understood them to

represent his master (whom, indeed, he had already seen) and two females, one of a stature almost diminutive. Both, on entering the house, retired instantly to a suite of apartments upon which a regiment of painters and decorators had been employed for at least a month.

The other carriages were filled with domestics, English and foreign, who immediately, without exchanging a word, set to work in their different departments as if they had lived at Mournivale all their previous lives. So quaint and singular was the whole proceeding, that the simple-minded steward felt as if he were moving about, in the midst of a band of beings of a different nature—whose supernatural gifts placed them alike beyond his help and control. They made civil gestures, and seemed to regard him with consideration enough; but none of them, none even of the English, spoke directly to him. And the language that did reach his ear had a curious rolling accent, such as he had never heard.

Determined to break the spell, Harper singled out a member of the mysterious company who appeared to discharge the office of cook, and who, being fattish, might prove good tempered. Accosting her as she glided by, he civilly inquired by what name he should address her.

"Morgan le Fay," replied the woman, sharply, baring her gleaming teeth in a sort of snarl.

"Morgan Liffey!" thought Harper. "Irish, eh?"

Feeling, or fancying, that his presence was not acceptable to the new comers, the excellent steward, who at present occupied one of the keepers' lodges, took a hasty leave, and withdrew.

"Hot dinners at half-past one in the morning!" thought Mr. Harper, as he tumbled into bed; "I wonder at what time they sup!"

CHAPTER III.

THE external doings of the new proprietor were equally remarkable. It had been decided in the neighbourhood that one of his first acts of ownership would be to thin the overgrown woods, wherein were thousands of noble specimens of oak, beech, elm, and fir—nay, even the fragrant cedar—positively pining for the axe. An enterprising timber merchant had prepared a tender, and only waited for what he considered a decent interval before presenting it. Sir George, however, did nothing of the kind. Contrariwise, on the only open ground near the mansion—a small green knoll—he immediately planted a handsome cluster of quick-growing shrubs and trees.

In a word, lonely as the place already was, Corsellis encircled the entire park with a new and strong palisade. Around the gardens he raised a lofty wall. He purchased, at a great expense, a certain alleged right of way, which, as the public never used it, was disputed by their representatives with tenfold obstinacy. He discouraged any advances on the part of his country neighbours, and rarely set foot beyond his own domain.

"Mad!" pronounced Sir Hugh Quickset, a neighbouring squire.

Sir George, who was in the commission, attended the next bench of magistrates. The lunatic took the lead in all the proceedings, decided a matter which involved great legal difficulty, snuffed out the pert clerk who had hitherto guided the decisions of the bench, and, with cool superior nods, took his leave, not to appear again. But Sir Hugh Quickset was silenced.

"Under a cloud," affirmed old Purkiss, of Great Covey: a retired solicitor, whose mental habit inclined to the suspicious. (If report were to be trusted, none had enjoyed better opportunities of judging what might be the aspect of a gentleman under the aforesaid atmospherical pressure than Mr. Purkiss himself!) But a royal duke who was staying in the county, rode across fifteen miles to visit Mournivale, stayed half the day, and walked through Covey-le-Street arm in arm with his host, in earnest conversation—Mr. Purkiss was bowled out.

Intense became the curiosity excited by the manifest desire of Sir George to conceal the course of his domestic life from every eye. The powers of conjecture were exhausted in imagining theories of explanation for the complete seclusion in which the family, the two ladies especially, were understood to live. In respect to this, the steward, Harper, was as profoundly ignorant as everybody else. Not only had he never seen his lady's face or heard her voice, but no intelligible allusion to her among the servants had ever reached his ear. He knew, however, that a Creole maid, called Eisa, was her principal attendant, and that she did occasionally give audience to Morgan le Fay.

"My lady calls," the latter would say, with a start; sometimes amid the clatter of the kitchen; sometimes when not a sound but the ticking of the clock broke the dead hush. And away she would hasten.

Harper observed that none of the domestics ever went abroad, except on Sundays, when such as were English attended the little church, and, service over, marched back again, being readmitted by the huge Dutch porter, Hans Troek, who never quitted his post by night or day, and the monotony of whose presence inspired Harper with such an insane desire to kick him, that, but for his native slowness of apprehension, Herr Troek must have read it in his face twenty times a day. Harper had to pass him so often, for on him devolved almost all the communication that was held with the outer world. In the forenoon the steward transacted with his master, any business relating to the estate. After that, he executed commissions for Morgan le Fay. At nine in the evening Harper found that he was expected to take his leave; and what went on after *that*, in the mysterious household, was a strange and gloomy secret.

CHAPTER IV.

"BUT about Lady Corsellis," was the perpetual question of the spinsterhood of Covey-le-Street, "who, and what can she be?"

And Covey the Great replied (through Mr. Tincture) that they would run any reasonable risk (except matrimony) to learn.

For months the neighbourhood was in a state of agreeable horror, for where mystery is there will be terror, and it got to be believed that Lady Corsellis, of Mournivale, was not a spectacle for human eyes to see. I can hardly explain through what fluctuations the general faith settled down (but so it did) into a conviction that, though otherwise fair of face, the unhappy lady had the snout of a pig! At all events, this belief triumphed. The district was rich in mast and acorns. In consideration of his consort, Sir George had suffered his beech and oak to stand!

There were still, it is true, dissentients to the porcine theory. At the Jolly Bachelor, in Great Covey, conducted by Mr. Brutus Bulfinch, the pig's face was opposed by a still more terrible surmise. It is doubtful whether the host would have admitted anybody into his parlour, or the barmaid (an elderly female, unmarried) executed her office with any degree of alacrity on behalf of one, who did not faithfully believe that it was either a pig's head or the devil: with a strong bias towards the latter opinion.

No wonder; for the very nephew of the host had had a glimpse of the phenomenon.

Coming home late from a distant market, Jack Bulfinch took it into his head to shorten the road, by cutting across the grounds of Mournivale. This was before the erection of the new wall. He had easily scaled the then-existing defences, had passed the mansion, and was about to dive into the plantation, when the great front door swung suddenly open, and out it came, walking tamely beside Sir George himself. Jack, by his own account, had barely time to notice that my Lady Corsellis had immense eyes, like lurid lanterns, which glowed even through a thick protrusive sort of covering that veiled her head and face; likewise, a tail of such prodigious length, that Sir George, with much seeming politeness, carried a portion of it across his arm. This tail went near to discredit Jack's, but for the confirmation the whole story received from the deposition (made rather with, than upon, oath) of Cephas Pudgebrook, the second gardener, who rolled the terrace on the following day, and observed that it bore distinct traces of a goat or pig, "dibbled regular all along." Mr. Pudgebrook was not a little horrified to learn that he had been actually engaged for two hours (all the while whistling careless secular tunes) in smoothing out the footprints of the enemy of mankind!

Curiosity was at its utmost stretch, when an order was one day received by Timothy Beadle, the purblind clerk, to have new hassocks placed in the Mournivale pew. Hassocks! They were, then, unquestionably coming to church next Sunday. At all events, Sir George and—the other—would come.

The Reverend Benedict Loanham, of Great Covey, prepared his best discourse. The number of those who attended their religious duties on

that day, transcended the recollection of the oldest inhabitant. The congregation were already seated, when the Lord of Mournivale, accompanied by two veiled ladies, entered by a private chancel, the party taking their seats in full view of the assembly.

General Sir George Corsellis was, at this time, a man past middle-age, of colossal build, massive head, broad nose, and eyebrows so redundant as almost to emulate little beards. The prevailing expression of this far from attractive face, was stern even to ferocity; but that it was capable of much softening was apparent even to purblind Timothy Beadle—who, throughout the service, addressed his responses personally to Sir George, adjured him in a stentorian voice to join in the performance of the psalmody, and having, in effect, bestowed upon the astonished gentleman his undivided attention, was, finally, in a position to aver that, whenever he (Corsellis) glanced at one of the veiled creatures at his side, his face changed “from a devil’s to an angel’s.”

The service drew to a conclusion without the veils being for an instant removed. It must be acknowledged that good Mr. Loanham (whose discourse had been directed against the indulgence of idle curiosity, and prying into mysteries out of our path) did his very best to advance the secret wishes of his flock: prolonging his address, by the aid of impromptu interpolations, to an extent which, under any other circumstances, would have been considered inordinate.

It was all in vain. Even every sermon must have an end—so had Mr. Loanham’s—and, with a reluctant blessing, the congregation dispersed. When a reasonable time had been allowed for all undesigning persons to withdraw, the Mournivale party quitted their pew; she, who was presumed to be Lady Corsellis, leaning upon her husband’s stalwart arm; the dwarf-like figure of their companion bringing up the rear. Every pretext for lingering about the little church-yard had by this time been exhausted. One individual, alone, stood rooted to the spot—Miss Tiffany. This lady remained, as it were, under a vow.

Miss Tiffany represented the strong-minded element in the circle of Covey-le-Street. To her, appeal was wont to be made in all such cases as, under ordinary social circumstances, would have necessitated the interposition of the masculine mind; and, hitherto, Miss Tiffany had been true to her position and herself. It was alleged of her, and by her, that, in no purpose on which she had really set her heart, had she ever been baffled. In a perhaps unguarded moment, she had pledged herself to see and to speak with one or both of the mysterious ladies of Mournivale. She was here to redeem that pledge.

Sending away her maid, Marian, to a little distance, she herself took up a position halfway between the church and the corner of an avenue of elms which formed a by-path to Mournivale.

As the three figures moved past, she touched the dress of her who walked alone.

“A thousand pardons,” said Miss Tiffany. “May I be allowed to sp—?”

The stranger made a sort of impatient bow, and continued her way.

Miss Tiffany, somewhat piqued by this reception, returned to the charge.

“Again, I ask your pardon,” she said. “I assure you, I am not a beggar. I wish merely to inquire what is Lady Corsellis’s pleasure concerning the proposed new sch—?”

The stranger put her hand upon her arm, as if to impose silence, but, with the other, pointed forward in such a manner as to invite Miss Tiffany to accompany her. Thus, maid Marian, watching in the distance, saw the four disappear into the avenue.

Another minute, and her mistress was seen returning; but with a step so strange and uncertain, and a demeanour altogether so unusual, that Marian started off hastily to meet her. To Marian’s alarm and surprise, Miss Tiffany took not the slightest notice of her; but reeled on, as it were, in the direction of home, her eyes fixed and staring, her face pale as ashes, her hands working wildly, as though in desperate endeavour to keep off some invisible assailant.

“Horror, horror!” was the only reply her terrified attendant could obtain, in answer to her repeated inquiries.

Arrived at home, Miss Tiffany went straight to her chamber, and, locking the door, remained in strict seclusion until the evening. Then she rang for Marian, and gave her certain directions for the morrow, which raised that young lady’s surprise and consternation to their climax.

On the following day, there appeared a notice in the front garden, describing that desirable cottage-residence as to be let, furnished or unfurnished, for an indefinite period, with instant possession.

To the numerous inquirers, answer was returned that Miss Tiffany had been summoned to the sick-bed of a relative, who, though near in blood, was somewhat distant in body, being, in fact, resident in Australasia. Consequently, Miss Tiffany must not be expected back immediately.

Miss Tiffany had, in real deed, departed that morning, and all the explanation afforded of this sudden resolution, was contained in the following note, addressed to an intimate friend:

“Good-by, Sophy dear. Love to all friends. *Shun Mournivale.* Beware of curiosity. Seek to know no more.

“Your unhappy friend,
“THERESA.”

I will not dwell upon the hubbub created by this event in the community of either Covey. My business is with facts, and the next fact in my recollection (putting aside innumerable unsubstantiated rumours concerning the doings of the family at Mournivale), is a visit paid one evening by the steward Harper to my friend Charley Tincture.

Harper, who was naturally a hearty fellow,

with a frank open manner of speech, now looked anxious and careworn, and spoke in a hesitating perplexed way which Charley could not understand.

He apologised for calling at that late hour—half-past nine—on the ground that he did not wish his visit known, and, presently untying a blue handkerchief which he carried in his hand, placed upon the table something that had very much the appearance of half a cold apple-tart.

"I wish you, sir," he said, "to be kind enough to examine this, and tell me if 'tis good for a Christian's dinner. If 'tis, why, there's an end; if not, why then I've got something more to say."

Tincture made him sit down, and retired to his surgery, sending, in pursuance of an idea that occurred to him, for myself, who happened to be passing the evening in his neighbourhood. Together we carefully analysed the viand, and, applying the usual tests, detected the presence of a certain vegetable poison, in sufficient quantity to destroy a dozen human lives.

On hearing this result, Harper turned so white and sick, that Charley had to administer a glass of brandy, after which the worthy steward commenced his tale, with the startling information that the pastry we had had under our consideration, together with numerous other delicacies, similarly seasoned, formed the daily bill of fare at Mournivale.

For a long time past—in fact, ever since the arrival of the family—the steward's attention had been from time to time attracted by a remarkable proceeding on the part of Morgan le Fay. Every dish, whether prepared by her own hands or those of assistants, received a slight addition, sometimes in a liquid, sometimes pulverine form, the materials being obtained from a sort of cabinet built into the wall, and secured with a small but massive metal door, of which Morgan le Fay always kept the key. This ceremony, though not absolutely performed by stealth, always seemed to be invested with a certain degree of mystery. It was etiquette to notice it as little as possible; but Harper could not help observing that every dish, after undergoing this singular preparation, was regarded with a respect and tenderness almost reverential, was handled with the extremest caution, and, when returned disabled from the dinner-table, was consigned by the high priestess, Morgan le Fay, to a receptacle expressly constructed for the purpose, from whence it never again emerged.

Perpetually haunted by this mystery, Harper at length conceived an irresistible desire to convince himself, by actual experiment, that a strange and horrible fancy, that would sometimes intrude itself into his mind, was erroneous and absurd. One day, by great good fortune, an opportunity occurred of securing a portion of apple-tart that had been almost half consumed in the parlour. Mr. Harper, possessing himself of an unfortunate dog whose condition of skin rendered his abrupt decease a matter of congratulation both to himself and mankind, presented him with a small portion of the pie, on

receipt of which the unfortunate animal uttered one broken howl, stretched himself out, and expired. Under the circumstances, Mr. Harper at once secured the remainder of the tart in his handkerchief, and hastened to submit it to medical scrutiny.

The case was curious, and difficult. In spite of the uncommon dietary, it was certain that nothing had happened at Mournivale to warrant legal interference. No enactment restricts the indulgence in arsenic, or belladonna, so long as they suit the constitution. It was ultimately agreed to keep the matter quiet, Harper undertaking to report to us, any new incident of an unusual nature that might come under his observation.

CHAPTER V.

It was not very long before a new phenomenon revealed itself. The summer was well advanced, and had been unusually sultry. The windows of Mournivale, like those of less mysterious mansions, remained open, or, at least, unshuttered, long after dark. It began to be declared that the sounds and appearances distinguishable through these windows, were not to be accounted for by any rules of ordinary domestic life. Regularly after nightfall—perhaps about ten o'clock—(as the country people asserted) the entire upper portion of the vast mansion became suddenly illuminated with a mighty red lustre, such as might proceed from the seething crater of a volcano at the close of an eruption. From thence were heard to issue loud and agonising shrieks, varied with the notes of some strange instrument of the trumpet kind, now and then a clash of cymbals, and, not unfrequently, a low horrible sound, which could only be described as a lion imitating the laugh of a man.

From midnight until one o'clock, the watchers declared, there usually reigned a profound silence. About the last-named hour, a long hoarse cry, unlike the voice of man or animal, pealed through the house, and, in a second, the lights in every room were extinguished like one. At that period, the rising ground planted by Corsellis was not covered with wood of sufficient growth to conceal the upper windows, and the crimson glow proceeding from them was plainly visible from the neighbouring village.

Speculation was busy over these strange doings, when a new and important circumstance occurred. Harper, having some business to transact with his master, repaired to the mansion one morning rather before his usual hour. Sir George was out, on horseback. As the steward retraced his steps through the hall, a violent shriek, twice or thrice repeated, struck his ear.

Yielding to the impulse of the moment, and imagining, as he afterwards explained, that some person's clothes had caught fire, he bounded up the hitherto sacred stair, and stood at the door of the first of the suite of apartments inhabited by the family. It was from hence that the shrieks had proceeded. The door was ajar. He pushed

it open. - All was hushed as death; but, on a rich sofa, lay a slight female figure, with the face turned away. Beside her knelt the diminutive form of the third member of the party—both of them motionless, as though carved in stone.

Suddenly, without any change in the attitude of the body or limbs, the head of the kneeling figure began to turn. Revolving slowly, as on a pivot, the face came completely round, and fronted Harper, as he stood rooted to the spot. And *what* a face! Wrought in grey granite, with a hideous carved grin, great white eyeballs in which no pupils were visible, a huge mocking mouth, seeming to dart out, like tongues, spiculae of lurid flame!

Harper—man as he was, and no timid man—thrilled with a nameless fear, made but three steps down stairs, and never stopped till he reached his own domain.

In relating this strange story to us, I observed that nothing seemed to have impressed him so strongly as the stony gleam of the woman's, or fiend's, eyes. His constant reference to this feature, no doubt, led to the habit we subsequently acquired, of talking of the personage alluded to as "Mournivale Stone-Eyes."

Many were inclined to discredit the whole narrative; but Harper silenced these detractors by giving notice to his employer, of his desire to quit his service as soon as arrangements could be made; and, as he had secured no provision for himself, it was only reasonable to believe him actuated by a genuine repugnance to connect himself with the haunted mansion.

The event next in order, I believe, was this:

The Mournivale property "marches," as they say in Scotland, on one side with that of Squire Harbutt: a country gentleman of considerable wealth, but who mixed little with the county society, and had punctiliously avoided his extraordinary neighbour. He was a magistrate, and had been one of those present on the occasion when Corsellis had so defiantly taken the lead in the proceedings of the bench. He had returned home not a little disgusted at the treatment he and his brethren had experienced.

It happened that Mr. Harbutt received a visit from his nephew, a captain in the army, who had been for some time in a local command. He had commanded a frontier corps at the Cape, employed in repelling the incursions of the Caffres: a duty requiring both courage and vigilance, and not without a certain smack of adventure greatly to the taste of the young officer.

The mysteries of Mournivale were not long in reaching his ears, and Captain Harbutt at once came to the conclusion that he could not beguile his three weeks' visit at Fairwoods better than by unravelling the same.

It was, I think, on the third or fourth day after his arrival, that a party, organised for the purpose, assembled by different paths after night-fall at a certain spot in the woodland. It consisted of Harbutt, Charley Tincture, Harper, a trusty keeper of Harbutt's famous for seeing in the dark, and myself.

There was a bright August moon, but she

was occasionally veiled by dense masses of cloud. We pushed our approaches nearer and nearer to the house, on the side not surrounded by gardens, and from which a small side-entrance alone gave access to the grounds. Just within a cedar-copse we sat in a circle, like a group of gentlemanly burglars awaiting their opportunity, the red sparks of our cigars alone revealing the whereabouts of each individual.

Harbutt was in the middle of a Caffre story, when an exclamation from our look-out, the keeper, directed our attention to the mansion. The windows, as usual, from one end to the other had suddenly become one blaze of lurid splendour. To this succeeded the accustomed shrieks and other sounds; the horrible unearthly laugh, and, what Harper had never noticed on former occasions, a faint wild wail, like that of a funeral chant, sung by many voices, at a distance so remote as only to be occasionally audible.

Prepared as he was for something unusual, Harbutt was struck dumb with genuine amazement at what he heard and saw.

"An orgy of demons in a country gentleman's house, in the nineteenth century!" he muttered, in a bewildered way.

Remark and conjecture were soon abandoned, and we continued to watch the glowing windows in silence—silence as deep as that which now prevailed in the haunted dwelling. As usual, from twelve o'clock not a sound was heard. But, as the distant village clock struck *one*, the hoarse wild cry pealed forth. Out went the lights like a single candle, and all was dark and still. We rose to go.

"Hark!" exclaimed Harbutt, stopping us. "I hear a knell!"

We listened. A low muffled sound, like a passing bell, came faintly on our ears.

"The door is opening," said the quick-sighted keeper.

Opening it was. And out issued a curious procession. A bier, or stretcher, covered with a pall, on which lay a corpse in white, was carried by four female figures in mourning-dresses. Behind these walked Sir George Corsellis, his head bare, a lady leaning on his arm; last came another woman, whom Harper recognised by the bright moonlight as Morgan le Fay. She led, by a chain, an animal which, but for its head, which was a dog's, would seem to be a lion, having the magnificent mane and tufted tail which characterise the monarch of the forest.

This strange pageant, made still more singular by the intermittent moon-gleams, at first (somewhat to our embarrassment) took the direction of our ambush; but, on approaching the covert, it inclined to the right, and passed to the rear of the copse. It was at this time so near, that Harper recognised the body on the bier as that of the fearful being we had been accustomed to speak of as "Mournivale Stone-Eyes." A sudden dash of moonlight fell upon the scene, and revealed the terrible grey face, and stone-white open eyes, as clearly as by day.

It was hastily agreed to thread the copse as

quietly as possible, and follow the progress of these strange obsequies. Captain Harbutt and the keeper, as the most experienced bushmen, led the way. The latter, in a few minutes, reported that the party had entered the copse—at a somewhat open part—in the rear, and might be seen by us without discovery, completing the ceremonial of burial. The grave must have been previously prepared—for scarcely had we taken up our positions, when the body was lifted from the bier, and lowered by means of long white scarfs deep into the earth. This done, there was a pause; when, apparently at a signal from Corsellis, Morgan le Fay approached the edge of the grave—leading the dog lion, from which the others seemed to shrink instinctively. She wound her arms in the beast's shaggy mane, drawing him fearlessly towards her, until his sharp nose and glowing eyes were over her shoulder. As she held him in this attitude, Corsellis made a sudden step forward. There was a gleam of something—a blow—a broken roar—and the animal rolled over and over into the open grave. The latter was then carefully filled and smoothed down, level with the surrounding surface; leaves and sprays were scattered lightly over it; and then Corsellis gave his arm to his lady, and the whole party returned to the mansion: the servants chatting gaily, and apparently only deterred by the stately presence of their master stalking on before, from enjoying a dance by moonlight.

So odd and unnatural had been the whole affair, that we could have easily fancied it a dream. No one present attempted a solution of the mystery. All we could do, was, to note by measurement the exact spot of this extraordinary interment; after which we returned home, consulting as to the steps that should next be taken.

A meeting was arranged for the following day at Fairwoods, when various opinions were expressed: the prevailing one being to the effect that some deed of violence had been perpetrated, to which it was our obvious duty to invite the attention of the authorities. This point being conceded, who should take the initiative? There was a general disinclination to commence the remarkable depositions which would have to be made, before any action could be taken having reference to a charge of murder. After much discussion, it was resolved to leave matters as they were, for at least one day; thus affording an opportunity of ascertaining, through Harper, what effect, if any, the removal of Mournivale Stone-Eyes had wrought upon the household.

On the evening of the succeeding day the steward attended, as had been agreed, at Mr. Tincture's lodgings; Mr. Harbutt and his nephew, Mr. Fanshawe (a neighbouring magistrate), and myself, being also present.

The statement Harper had to make rendered the mystery still more profound and complex than before. The preceding day had, to all appearance, been one of jubilee at Mournivale. Sir George Corsellis had gone out riding in the

forenoon, actually accompanied by his lady, who was mounted on a beautiful Spanish jennet, lately arrived in Sir George's stables. The groom who attended them reported that they had paid more than one visit to distant country residences, galloping across the country, laughing like children, and apparently in the very highest glee. Her ladyship was still veiled, but she had spoken to each and all of the domestics in the course of the day, making them some presents, and ordering that they should have a little feast, to celebrate, as she said, the most joyous event in her existence.

Of Mournivale Stone-Eyes not one word was said. It would seem, however, that her terrible mysterious influence was no longer an object of dread. The servants went where they pleased about the mansion. Harper himself—in company with Eisa the Creole, and two or three of the other domestics, who were ordered to rearrange some furniture in the upper rooms—had visited almost every apartment in the house, without detecting any trace of her occupancy. Stone-Eyes was unquestionably gone! But, *whither?*

Before the council broke up, it was settled that Squire Harbutt and Mr. Fanshawe should, next morning, wait upon the proprietor of Mournivale, and commence operations by referring to the subject of the poisoned tart: the agency of poison being, in Mr. Harbutt's mind, inseparably associated with the midnight scene we had witnessed.

CHAPTER VI.

THE countenance of the big Dutch porter exhibited as much surprise as its natural construction permitted, when the two magistrates requested, in tones slightly peremptory, an audience of his master.

After a moment's delay, they were invited to enter, and conducted to a magnificent library, in which sat Sir George, alone. That gentleman received them with frigid politeness, and so manifestly looked for an immediate explanation of their visit, that Mr. Harbutt at once plunged into the matter.

Sir George raised his bushy eyebrows with apparently unfeigned astonishment, but made no remark.

"We are desirous, sir, of obtaining from you, if willing to afford it, authority to contradict in your name certain strange rumours afloat in the neighbourhood respecting——"

"Well, gentlemen, 'respecting'——?"

"Respecting," resumed Mr. Harbutt, coolly putting on his spectacles, in order to scan the general's face more minutely, "the disappearance of a member of your household!"

Corsellis gave a slight start. Seated with his back to the light, it was not easy to detect any change of countenance. It was clear, however, that he was agitated.

"Allow me to remind you, Sir George," said Mr. Fanshawe, "that we do not wish to press upon you any question you are indisposed to answer; but permit me to ask you, is the use of deadly poisons permitted in your family?"

"*Poisons*, sir!" repeated Corsellis, grasping the arms of his chair, as though about to rise, but only leaning forward. "Explain yourself. Are you aware of what you are saying?"

"Perfectly. You have a domestic in your service, Sir George, called 'Morgan le Fay.'"

"The cook. And then?"

"Will you allow me to ask her a single question?"

Corsellis, for reply, put his lips to a voice-conductor in the wall:

"Send Morgan here."

A minute of profound silence followed. Then Morgan le Fay appeared at the door, fresh and rosy, curtseying, and smoothing the snow-white apron that rather adorned than concealed her plump and portly form. Sir George pointed to her, looking at his visitors interrogatively.

"We are desirous to ask you one question, my good woman," said Mr. Harlbutt. "My friend and myself are magistrates. Don't agitate yourself, I beg. It is simply this; a poisoned ap—Good Heavens! She has fainted!"

Morgan le Fay had swooned, and that so suddenly that Mr. Fanshawe, who was nearest, barely caught her as she reached the ground. Sir George rang for assistance. Some of the maids arrived, and the woman recovered.

"I—I knew it would come. God help us!" gasped the poor creature, as she was borne away.

A gloomy silence followed this scene. It was broken by Sir George himself.

"Well, gentlemen; as I presume the throwing my cook into a fit was not the whole object of your visit, in what may I satisfy you further?"

"I will tell you, Sir George Corsellis," said old Harlbutt. "It has been openly affirmed, in the neighbourhood, that an individual known to have been, ever since your arrival, resident in your household, has suddenly disappeared, under circumstances which warrant suspicion—only suspicion, understand—of poison. When I mentioned this disappearance, a few minutes ago, you started. When I spoke of poison in the presence of your servant, she fainted. And her first words, on recovering, might easily bear a construction most unfavourable to innocence."

He paused. Sir George looked at him for a moment, as though in meditation. Then he replied:

"There is truth in what you say. Gentlemen, I will not conceal from you that I desire to close this interview as speedily as courtesy permits. In what way can I satisfy the extraordinary suspicions to which you have apparently lent yourselves? By the way, to which member of my household do they point? To my wife?"

"No, Sir George. To the lady who is supposed *not* to bear your name."

"Miss Blatchford. Well, gentlemen, be pleased to follow me."

They passed up the wide staircase, and through a portion of the house, until their conductor stopped at a door which, softly opening at his touch, admitted them to a kind of veiled gallery, like an orchestra, from which they could

observe, unseen, the interior of one of the rich saloons.

Two young ladies were there; one, engaged in some delicate work that looked like a bride-veil for a fairy; the other, reading aloud.

"Lady Corsellis, Miss Blatchford," said Corsellis, in a subdued tone, pointing to them in the order in which they have been mentioned.

Squire Harlbutt almost started at the beauty he saw before him. Desirée Lady Corsellis (born de Ahna) was a woman almost too fair to live. It seemed impossible that a being so perfect in loveliness, so delicately touched and retouched—as if Nature had for once resolved upon a masterpiece—should be subject to the common needs and ills of poor mortality. A brightness radiated from her, almost pleading indulgence for the ever-recurring fancy that something more than human resided in the shape called Lady Corsellis.

Of Miss Blatchford I will only say that, if fairies are ever dark, she might have been their queen. Small and slender as a child, the perfect symmetry of her proportions, and the easy finished grace of every movement, proved that she was, in all respects save stature, as near the perfection of womanhood as the most fastidious critic could desire.

Sir George allowed his visitors two minutes to contemplate the lovely picture before them, then once more led the way down stairs. At the door of the library he paused, as though expecting his visitors to take their leave. But a word whispered in Mr. Harlbutt's ear by his colleague, as they came down stairs, had determined the half-satisfied squire to go through with the matter.

"*A substitute?*" Mr. Fanshawe had suggested, pointing up-stairs.

"That there may be no further intrusions on your privacy, Sir George," resumed Mr. Harlbutt, "will you frankly permit Mr. Fanshawe and myself to visit that portion of your premises indicated by the village gossips as the place of burial of—of the—the supposed victim?"

The colour mounted to Corsellis's brow. He clutched the table against which he was standing, manifestly struggling hard to preserve an unruffled demeanour.

"Believe me, sir, nothing short of this will completely refute the scandal. But you will act as you please," added the old gentleman, as he took up his hat.

Sir George made one turn in the apartment, as if meditating on the course he should adopt; then he replied:

"Be it so, gentlemen. I was as little aware of the interest my proceedings were creating, as of the vigilant watch kept upon me. My unhappy secret is about to be disclosed, and since it is useless to cast any obstacles in the way of that investigation in which your duty, I suppose, alone compels you to persevere, I will myself aid in the discovery."

He rang the bell. It was answered by Trock, the porter.

"Send three of the garden people with spades to the rear of the cedar-copse."

Signing to the magistrates to follow, Corsellis passed into the garden, and, thence, by a small door into the outer grounds. The gardeners arriving at the same instant, Corsellis led the party directly to the scene of the midnight burial. Pointing to the spot where the fresh-turned soil indicated the grave, he ordered his men to dig.

A hole was quickly made. Fast flew the loose black mould to the surface. Presently, one of the labourers held up his hand.

"There is something here," he said.

"Well, man, up with it. Why do you stop?" exclaimed Corsellis, impatiently stamping his foot.

The men carefully uncovered the buried "something," and handed to the surface the carcase of an animal of the canine family, but with a shaggy mane and crest, something resembling those of a lion. Even in death, there was something curiously fierce and repulsive in the aspect of the hybrid beast. It had been stabbed with some broad keen blade, absolutely through and through.

"Gentlemen, are you content?" asked Corsellis, pointing at the animal as it lay at his feet. "This dog-lion acknowledged but two masters in the world—myself, and my servant Morgan. He became dangerous. We tried to poison him in vain. I killed him with my Malay creese, and here's his carcase. What more?"

"But, what *below* him, sir?" said old Harbutt.

Corsellis bit his lip. His eye glared upon the speaker with a gleam hardly less ferocious than that of his own dog-lion, when alive; he looked round upon the circle; then, in a fury, burst out:

"Dig, dig, fellows, and have done with it! Cast out, cast out! Quick, now! That's well!"

A spade had rested upon something else than mould. The earth was rapidly cleared away, and exposed the folds of a shroud.

"Lift her carefully, fellows," said Corsellis, with a sort of fierce laugh. "Soft, now, soft! Do not expose those delicate limbs. Remember, though dead, she is a woman. Now, altogether. There!"

The stiffened frame was laid upon the grass close at hand. Then Sir George, taking the shroud in his two hands, rent it from top to bottom, and threw the pieces apart. It was an artist's lay-figure. On the face appeared a hideous mask, with white stony eyes, so constructed as to pass round and round: showing the face in any direction, as though the neck were invertebrated.

"There, gentlemen, is the whole secret," said Sir George, "since you will be content with nothing less. And here," he added, in a tone suddenly changed to one of the deepest feeling, "here is the key to the mysteries of

Mournivale. My darling wife was—thank God I may now so express it—*mad*. Gentlemen, I was assured by a foreign physician, whose life has been passed in the study of brain disease, that if I would fearlessly and minutely follow the directions he would give me, as adapted to my wife's peculiar case, there was every hope, nay, almost certainty, of ultimate restoration. A portion of his system involved an absolute indulgence of the delusion under which she laboured. Her delusion was, that she had passed into the custody of a fiend, in whose fiery palace she was condemned to pass two hours nightly, amidst the noise and riot of fearful beings who were invisible to her. For months this hallucination was humoured. At length, certain symptoms which were from time to time carefully reported to the professor, induced him to authorise a daring experiment. *We resolved to kill the fiend*. It was done; we not only killed, but the more deeply to impress the supposed occurrence on my poor patient's mind, *buried*, her persecutor with all the pageant that the resources of my establishment could supply, sacrificing at the same time my poor Lion, on whose temper I could no longer depend.

"As touching the poison, Mr. Harbutt," continued Sir George, "I conclude that my cook's consternation arose from the fear that some apple-tart intended for the destruction of Lion, had been productive of mischief elsewhere—a circumstance I should deeply deplore. At all events, I know that the poisoned dish was missing, and that its disappearance created no small anxiety. When I add that our own viands were occasionally seasoned with homœopathic preparations, I think I have touched upon everything you could desire to know. If not, give me the pleasure of your company on any future day, and I will complete my explanations, as well as make you known to my wife, and her nurse, friend, and cousin in one—our ex-demon—Miss Blatchford."

Sir George and his lady resided here for two years—mixing frequently with society, everywhere popular and welcome guests. When, at the end of that time, Miss Blatchford married Captain—then Colonel—Harbutt, Sir George and his wife went to Italy, and continued, I believe, to reside there, until the death of both—on the same day—at Florence.

Here comes our engine! If my little story has beguiled the interval, I am sufficiently rewarded.

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